



R/UDAT ★ AUSTIN

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

REPORT OF A

REGIONAL/URBAN DESIGN ASSISTANCE TEAM

Submitted to

The Citizens of the City of Austin

January 21, 1991



Sponsored by: Austin Chapter, American Institute of Architects
City of Austin
Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce

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THE CHARGE

The Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) was invited to Austin by the City of Austin, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, and the Austin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, "to assist in the assessment of those current conditions and the transfer of today's community interest in downtown into a strategy for action and to potentially provide a spark for additional public-private action."



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past few days, the Austin R/UDAT Team has examined Austin's downtown, and listened to hundreds of citizens who care about their downtown. We've listened to people who work downtown, own businesses there, are residents, live in adjoining neighborhoods, and study downtown. What we've seen and heard support's Austin's reputation as a very special city. With a high regard for participating democracy, the wonderful setting, ethnic and cultural diversity, dynamic public/private relationships, and spirit and concerns of Austin citizens and leaders have made a strong impression on the team.

Austin's wealth of urban, natural and cultural assets constitute the most compelling rationale for significantly increasing the community's commitment to its heart, its downtown. In the words of Austinite Nan McRaven, "Austin has a good downtown. It should have a great downtown." The R/UDAT team wholeheartedly agrees. Speaker Pro Tempore Wilhemina Delco says tht "Austin should be inclusive, not exclusive."

A great downtown in Austin will require a solid, sustained commitment that is guided by a clear, articulated, agreed-to vision. The R/UDAT Team suggests a concept and language for a downtown vision in this report. The community must now make the vision its own. First agree on it, then commit the needed resources to its implementation. Subsequent community actions must hew to the vision.



We have included numerous recommendations about steps and actions that are needed in downtown organizations, the natural and built environment, transportation, and governmental policies. We have discussed linkages between the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods like East Austin, and made recommendations for improvements.

Lastly, we have suggested a process for implementation, and priorities for action. Importantly, the R/UDAT team thinks an inclusive community process is an essential element for achieving the vision. There must be a recognition of the interdependence of the minority communities and that investment in one requires it in the other and that both support each other. The implementation program is built around the notion that short term actions should focus heavily on those items that will help ensure the new Convention Center is viewed as a strong success story. There is a mere 15 to 18 month period for this purpose. Other important priorities, in particular those that can build on a successful Convention Center experience, are also identified.

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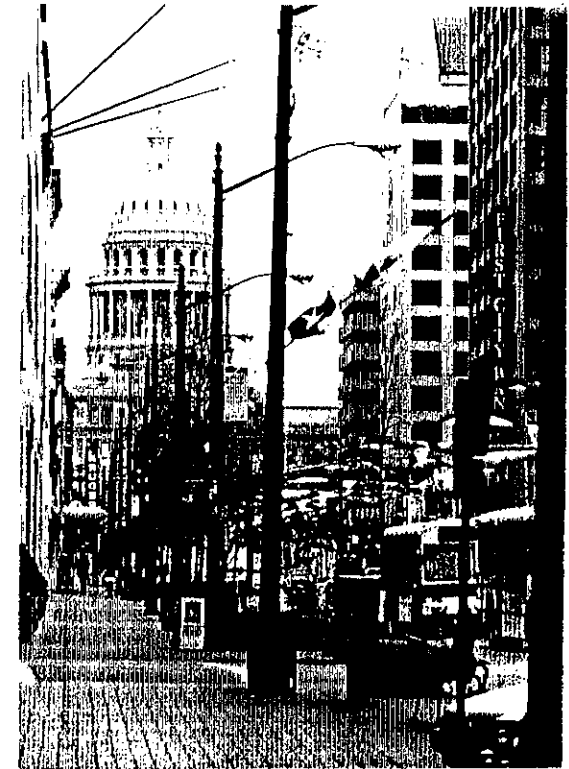
CONTEXT AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

The City of Austin has a long and proud history. Its location and beauty are not the result of historical accident. From its conception, Austin was designed to serve as the capital of a vast nation full of energy and promise. Today, Austin retains most of the character and beauty that captured the imagination of the early leaders and citizens of the Republic of Texas. It also faces many of the significant challenges confronting urban areas throughout America in the 1990's.

Downtown Austin is more than a simple set of geographic boundaries. It is a living organism. It is a complex set of relationships. It is the economic and social heart of the city. It is the community's most significant investment. And, it is in trouble. While Downtown Austin and the community as a whole possess enormous strength, there are serious reasons to be concerned about the near term future of the Downtown. What follows is a summary of some of the strengths and weaknesses that currently exist. These lists should be viewed as a rough kind of balance sheet for the Downtown, an accounting of its collective assets and liabilities.

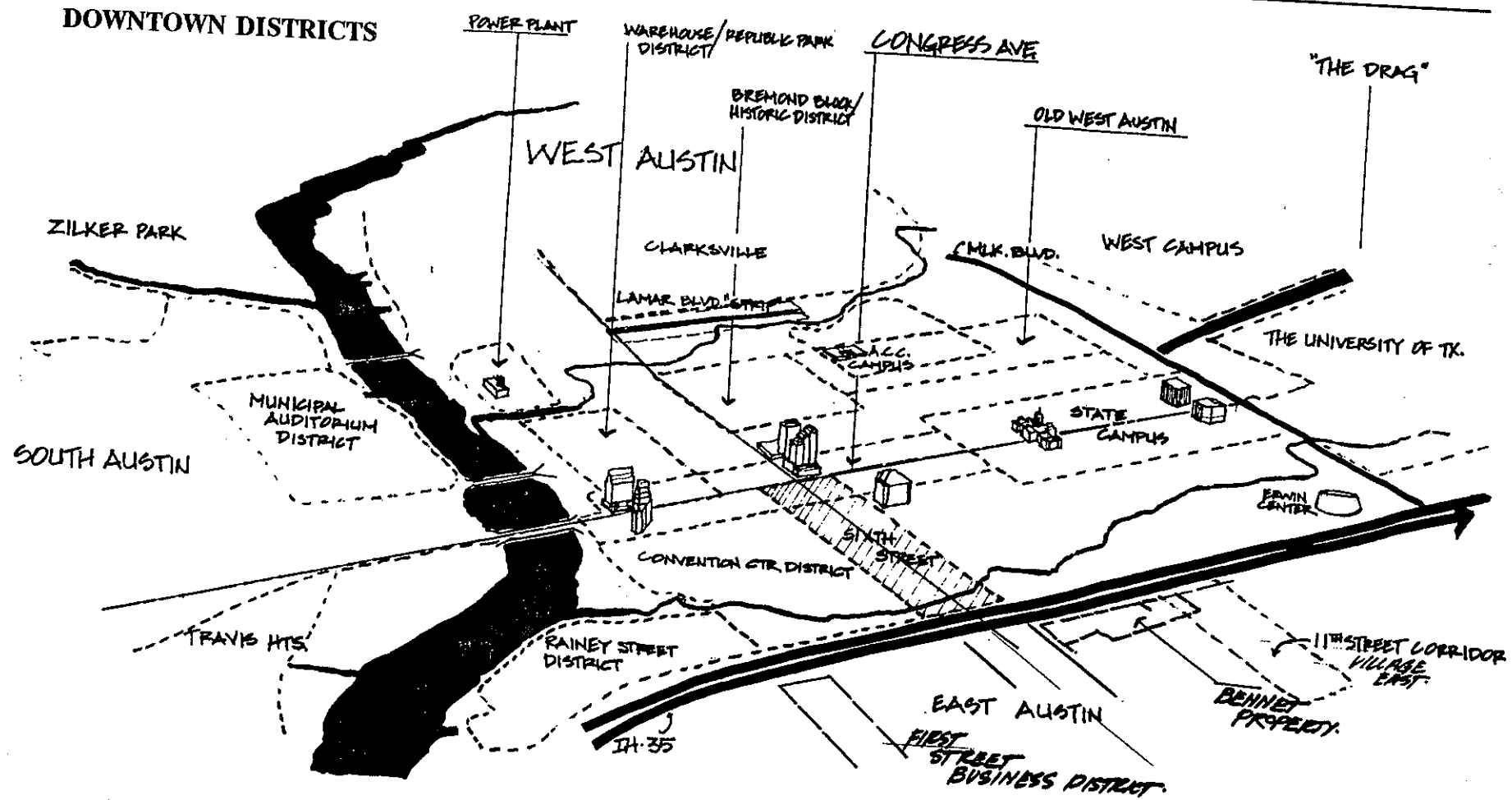
STRENGTHS

- Austin's physical setting on the banks of the Colorado River at the foot of the Texas Hill Country is spectacular. Town Lake, Waller Creek and Shoal Creek, Barton Springs and the nearby lakes are significant natural amenities.
- The presence of The University of Texas and the State Capitol and associated state agencies make Austin the center of government, culture and ideas for the State of Texas and beyond. It is more than simply the home of a large bureaucracy. It is a true capital in the fullest sense of the word.
- Austin has an energetic and educated population. It is ethnically and culturally diverse. People participate in the affairs of the community. There is a wealth of creativity and a strong desire to preserve and promote the best of what Austin has to offer. Austin is a city with pride.
- The last five years have been difficult economically. Despite this fact, the long term economic base of Austin is sound and relatively diverse. The downtown tax base is



still quite significant. The State and University presence creates a huge potential market for retailing and services, and insulates the community from the full effects of normal business cycles. The non-state workforce in downtown is still substantial and high quality office space is available at an affordable rate. By national standards, Austin's current economic and fiscal position is really not that bad.

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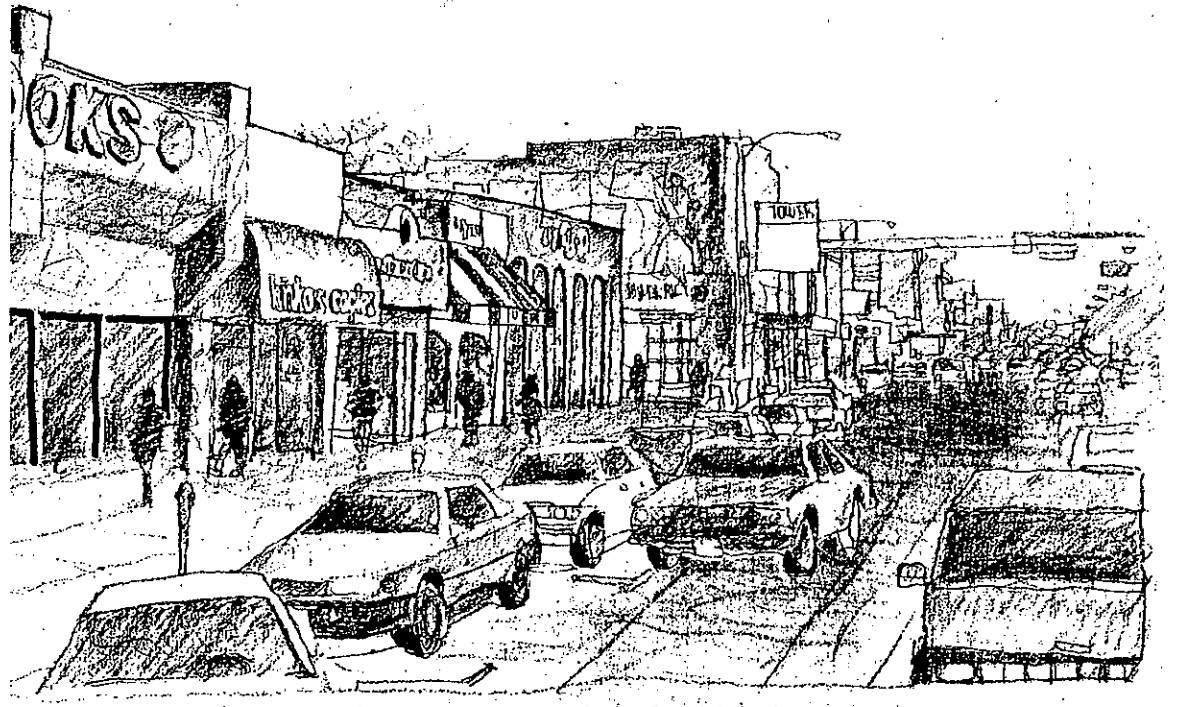
- Downtown itself possesses many strong resources and links to its history. Congress Avenue remains a great civic boulevard. East Sixth Street continues to demonstrate

great resiliency. It is the most vital, active street in the Downtown. The stock of remaining historic structures in the Downtown is still quite large. These buildings provide interest and

character, and help maintain a human scale for development in downtown. Foremost among these historic buildings is the State Capitol.

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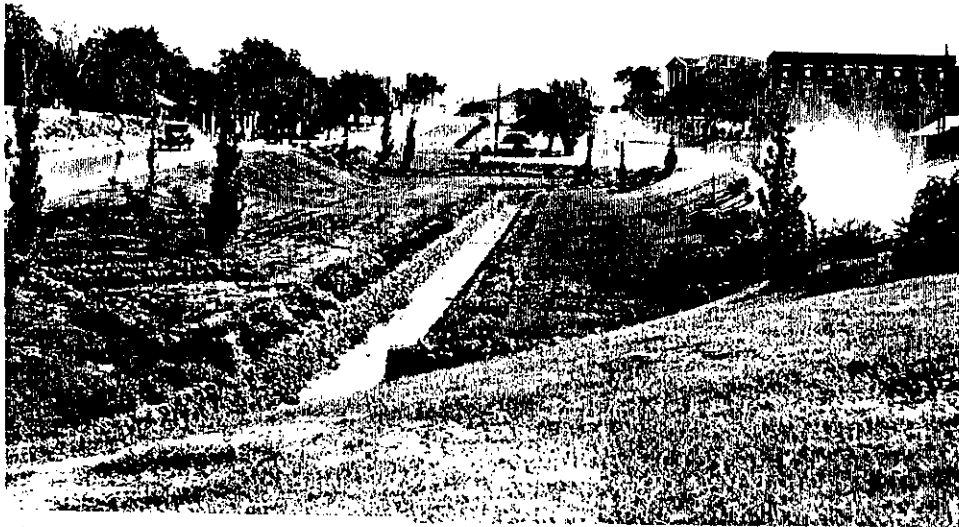
- Austin is truly a destination for visitors. The music industry continues to thrive. The new Convention Center provides a significant opportunity to attract more visitors and provide a stronger market base to support the activities desired by visitors and local residents alike. This potential has barely begun to be tapped.
- While specific problem areas exist, access to Downtown Austin is relatively easy. Mobility within the region and between downtown and outlying areas is not an immediate constraint to downtown development.



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WEAKNESSES

- Downtown benefits little from the enormous economic activity and market potential represented by the faculty and students of The University of Texas or State complex employees. Linkages between these two major areas and downtown are weak or nonexistent.
- IH-35 presents a formidable barrier between downtown and East Austin. This separation has effectively divorced the East Austin neighborhoods from downtown. The separation is visual, psychological, physical and inescapable.

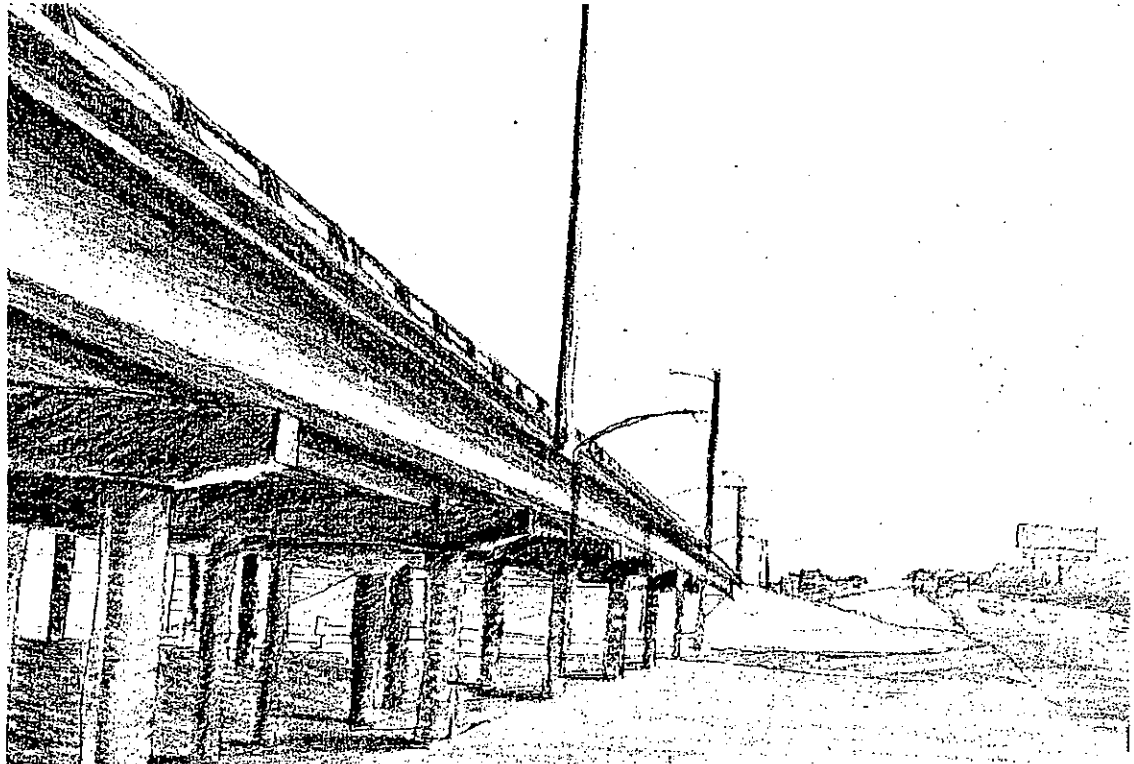


EAST AVENUE BEFORE IH-35

- Downtown's historic role as a retail center has been almost entirely lost. Few stores remain and the mix of retailing type is quite limited. Few stores in the downtown can function as single destinations for retail customers. The majority of the remaining retailing is convenience shopping for Downtown employees. As a result, the market for virtually all land uses remains soft.
- Development in outlying portions of Austin and beyond the city limits has captured a large portion of the retail, employment and housing opportunities. City policies towards growth in outlying areas have increased municipal capital and service obligations in these areas, creating further competition for limited city resources.
- Many traditional downtown uses have been permitted or even encouraged to occur outside of the downtown area. State and City offices, civic buildings, hotels, significant high rise office towers and major retail centers have all been proposed or actually developed in locations outside the downtown. These events further reduce activity in the downtown and promote a predominantly suburban form for the urban area.
- Austin and its citizens have proposed an abundant list in an almost dizzying array of projects to be developed in the downtown area. Despite the creativity that these proposals embody, there appears to be no underlying vision or concept that is guiding their development. Few priorities have been established. Accountability for producing results is lacking. The criteria by which projects are evaluated in terms of need, siting funding and impact on downtown are missing.

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- Basic service issues in downtown have not been adequately addressed. The downtown environment must be safe, clean and active in order to succeed. It must be enhanced physically and marketed collectively. Methods for property owners and merchants to address these issues directly in conjunction with the City are lacking. The limited service commitment made by the City to date is threatening to undermine the community's very substantial investment in downtown.
- There is a high degree of frustration in portions of the community regarding the lack of inclusion of all segments of the community, particularly African-American and Hispanic residents of East Austin. Failure to effectively address these issues further fragments the community and reduces the community's ability to produce meaningful results. To succeed, downtown needs to be everybody's neighborhood. Today, that is not the case.
- There is little housing in downtown proper. The few residential units that exist are isolated. Virtually no services or amenities, other than open space along the river and



creeks, exist to support downtown housing. As a result, the vitality of the area is further reduced.

- Physically, the distances between activity centers are great. The absence of any effective linkages or an appealing environment for walking further reduces the likelihood that State or University employees or students will venture downtown. The Capitol complex itself serves as a significant barrier.

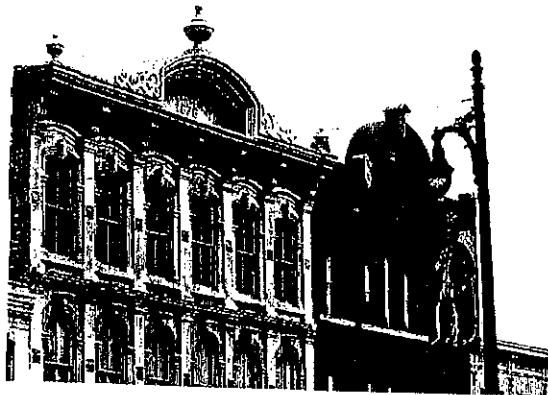
Except for the Capitol building, the overall feel of the State complex area is sterile and institutional. Blank building facades, large parking structures and few street amenities characterize the area. The redevelopment now in design may modify this current liability.

- Access and linkages to the substantial resources of Town Lake, Waller Creek and Shoal Creek have not yet been maximized. Great

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concepts have been only partially developed. Gaps in the network of trails and access points still exist.

- The most recent wave of high rise development in downtown has yielded mixed results. The relationship of small existing buildings (historic and non-historic) to adjacent office towers and hotels is awkward in some locations. The feel of the downtown at street level is uneven and varies greatly from block to block.
- Key organizations with a significant stake in downtown do not coordinate their activities. The City, County, University, and State rarely work effectively as a unit to address downtown issues. Downtown also suffers from the absence of a single, strong downtown business advocacy, promotion and management group.



IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT TRENDS

While no one can predict the future, existing conditions and trends should be a cause for concern among members of the Austin community. If nothing is done, the very likely results are a downtown that will:

- be occupied between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. only.
- experience increased difficulty supporting existing hotels and East Sixth Street businesses.
- be increasingly dominated by the automobile and resulting structured and surface parking.
- be characterized by barrier streets and little pedestrian traffic.
- provide virtually no significant retail services and will have very limited ability to attract shoppers from other parts of the city and region.
- experience further decline in the stability and viability of adjacent residential areas.
- ultimately generate less tax revenue than it does today.
- see public safety and maintenance issues become increasingly problematic.
- be characterized increasingly by fortress island of activity that minimizes contact with the rest of downtown and facilitate easy entry and access by auto.



- fail to maximize its potential to attract visitors and convention delegates to the city and to downtown.

Like the ghosts that appear to Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol, these are only visions of what may be, not what must be. But the warning signs are there. Austin is a proud city with a rich heritage. In its history, it has successfully resisted the efforts of presidents to move the Capitol elsewhere. It has been a stage for some of the most significant events in Texas history. It has weathered the turbulence of economic boom and busts. The challenge Austin faces today is to organize itself and its energy to save downtown from the fate which will follow these trends.

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DIRECTIONS FROM PAST PLANS AND PROPOSALS

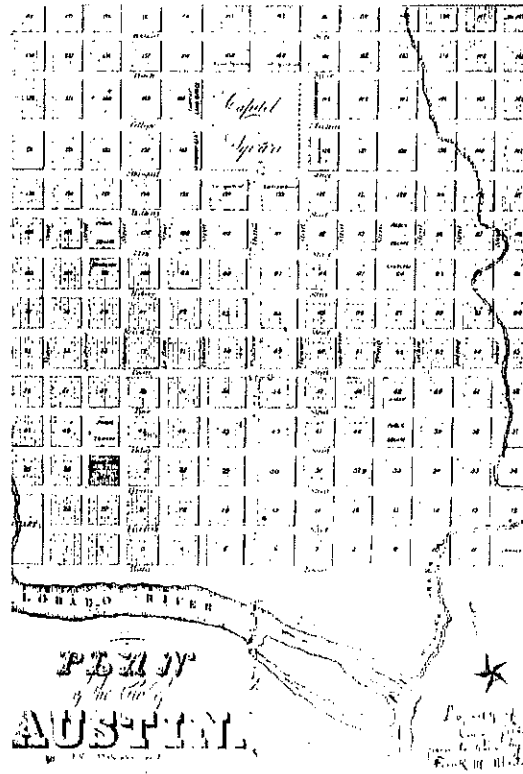
During the course of our R/UDAT visit, we were introduced to over eighty proposals for new projects that are located in, or substantially impact downtown. The impressive volume of previous study shows that there is no lack of enthusiasm and interest on the part of the public, and nearly all of the proposed projects were creative and visionary. Unlike R/UDAT teams in other communities, we found that there was little need for us to provide new ideas, but a strong need to suggest priorities.

EARLY PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Planning of previous decades has yielded a number of significant built projects. Most notable among these are park improvements at Town Lake, "Hike and Bike" trail improvements at Waller Creek and Shoal Creek, sidewalk improvements on Congress Avenue and historic preservation ordinances in several downtown areas. Collectively, these measures have left a framework that current planning has built from.

RECENT PLANNING EFFORTS

Recent planning history is notable for a broad range of proposed public, and public/private projects which have been frustratingly difficult to implement due to a



difficult economic and political climate. A notable exception is the new Convention Center which is now under construction, and is the first significant step toward downtown revitalization in several years.

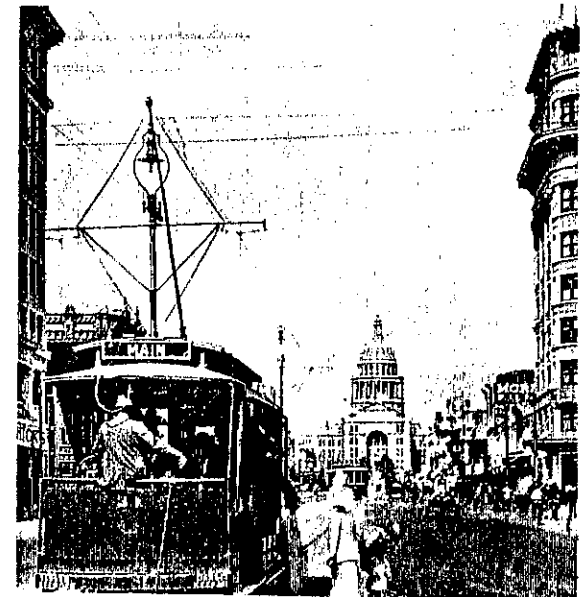
Other significant proposals for downtown projects include the following:

Capitol Metro Light Rail Transit: A proposal for the first increment of a light rail transit system connecting the downtown with neighborhoods to the north

Historic Trolley: A proposal for a restored trolley line connecting downtown with the Capitol

Transportation Proposals

Austin Gateway: A parkway and street improvement project on 3rd and 4th Streets



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Historic Steam Train: A proposal for including service to downtown in the plans for a historic steam train project currently underway in Northwest Austin.

IH-35 Expansion: Proposal to increase the number of lanes and add overhead access ramps to IH-35.

PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

Sixth Street Improvements: Part of the overall plan for improvements to the East Sixth Street music and entertainment district.

Waller Creek: Improvements to the existing park lands and hike / bike trail system.

Town Lake Bicycle Path: A parks department proposal to add a separate bicycle path to the park area along Town Lake to reduce bicycle / pedestrian conflicts.



The Rambla: Proposed improvements to 3rd Street into a tree lined pedestrian avenue as part of redevelopment of the Republic Square area.

North Congress Avenue Connection to The University of Texas Campus: A proposal to redevelop Congress Avenue from the Capitol building, north to Martin Luther King Jr. Way, making a strong visual and pedestrian connection between the Capitol Campus, and the University Campus.

First Street: Pedestrian improvements to First Street to make it more compatible with park uses along Town Lake.

Trinity Avenue Improvements: Pedestrian street improvements to Trinity Avenue making a connection from the new Convention Center to the East Sixth Street District.

First Street Improvements: Pedestrian street improvements to First Street, making a strong connection between the Convention Center, Congress Avenue, and Town Lake.



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DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Municipal Center: A three block redevelopment project north of First Street and west of Congress Avenue.

East Austin NCCD proposal: An active proposal to encourage commercial redevelopment on 11th St. east of IH-35.

Bennett Property Proposal: A development proposal to develop a mixed use retail / hotel / office project on vacant property immediately east of IH-35 in East Austin.

Capital Metro/East Fourth Street Site Development: An open air market on the now vacant site between East Fourth and Fifth Streets just east of IH-35.



ARTS AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

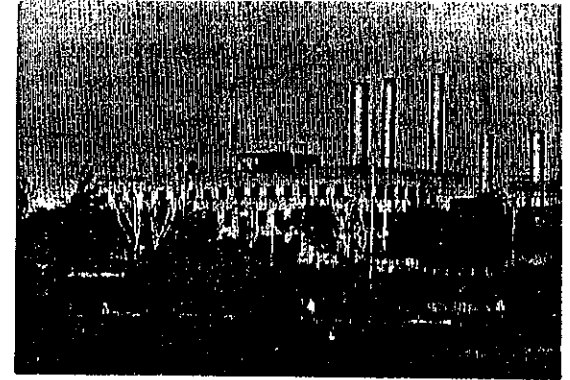
Laguna Gloria Art Museum: A proposal for a new civic art museum once to be located in the Republic Square area.

Town Lake Science Park: A proposal to construct a series of linked facilities for education and recreation in the sciences.

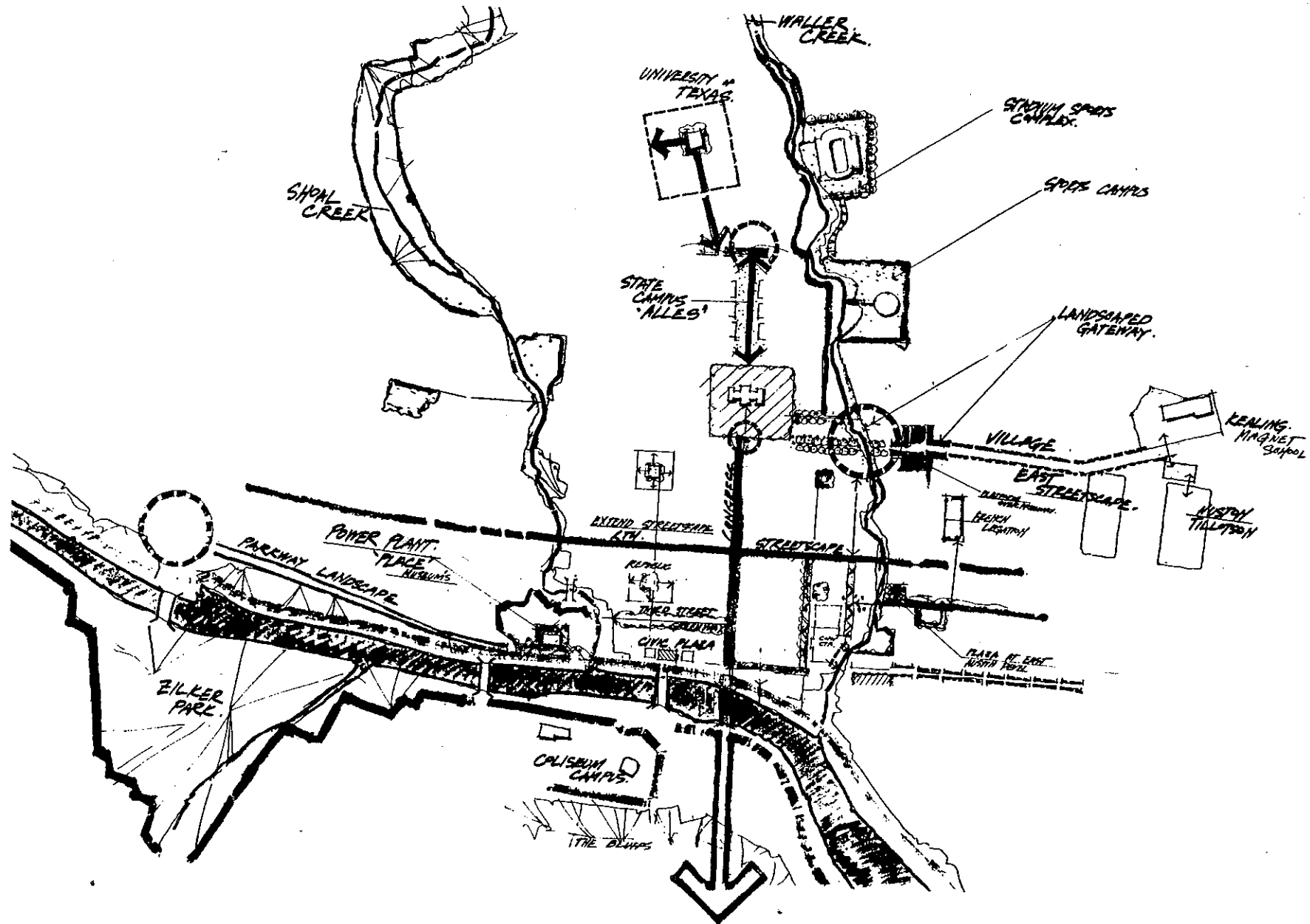
Power Plant Adaptive Reuse: A proposal to use the existing City power plant building on Town Lake to provide a community arts center with facilities for performing arts.

Texas Music Museum: A proposal to develop facilities for presentation and performance of local music, and the music industry.

Austin Community College: Current development of the existing high school site on Rio Grande Avenue for community and vocational/technical education.



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OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK

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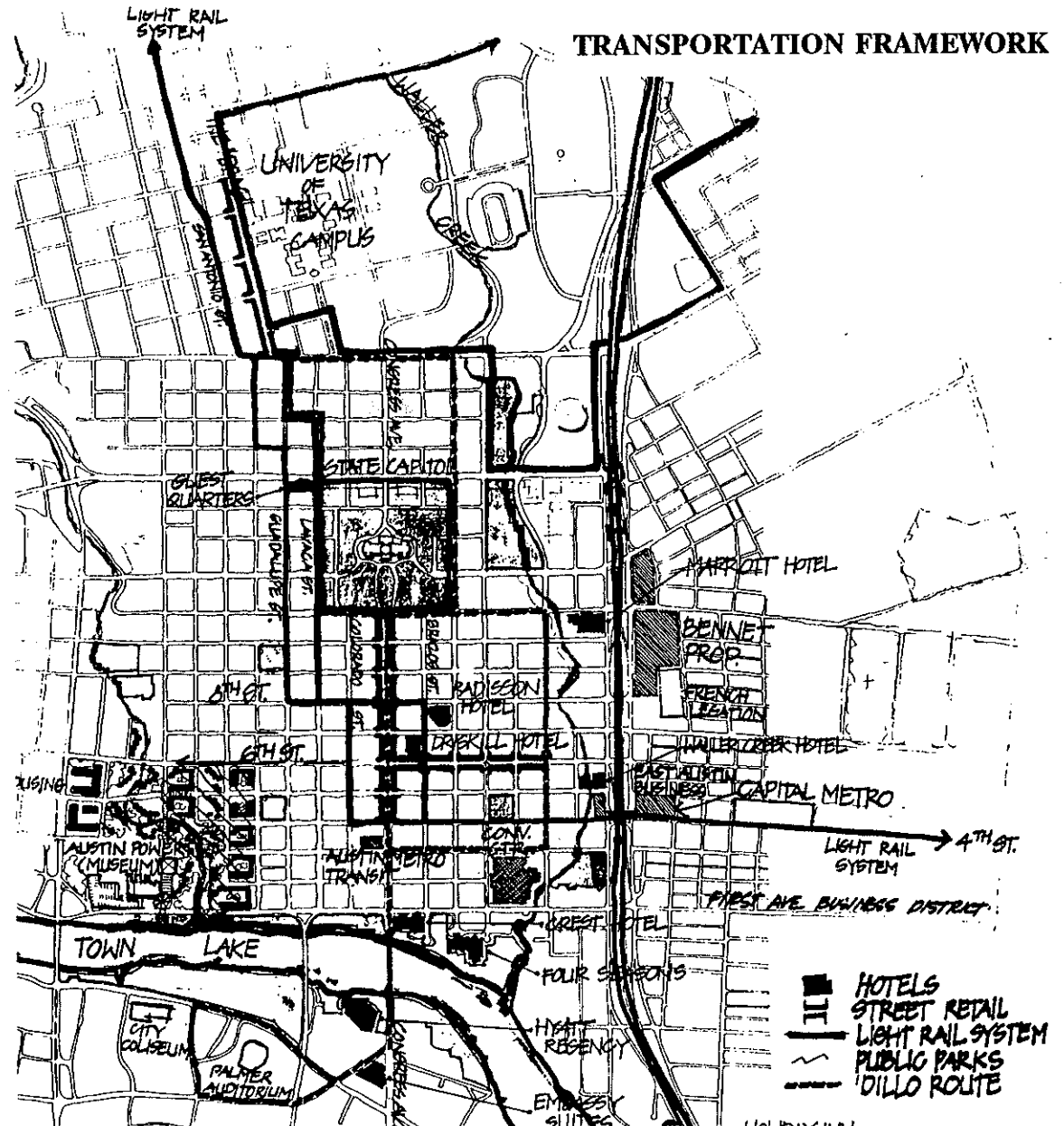
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A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

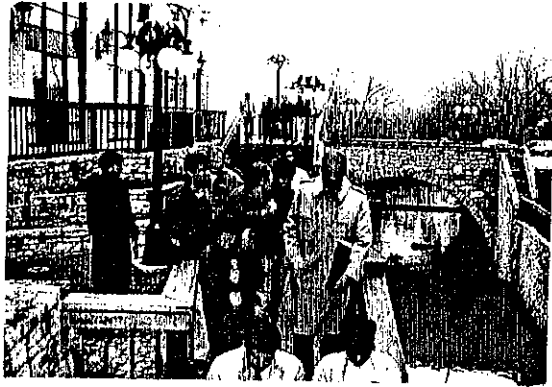
The challenges Downtown Austin faces are complex. There is no dearth of creativity, energy or opportunities in this community. What is lacking is a basic vision to guide downtown, one based on fundamental values strongly held and adhered to by the community. Even enormous commitments of dollars and energy invested without a guiding vision will almost certainly produce disappointment. Buildings, amenities and jobs can be created, but downtown will not necessarily succeed.

The vision that guides Downtown Austin need not be overly complex. In fact, it can be relatively simple and still be quite powerful. Based upon what we have seen and heard, we would suggest that the following might represent the type of vision this community holds but has yet to articulate.

1. Downtown provides the identity and focal point for the community: Downtown Austin is not just a collection of buildings. It is the active heart of the community. Downtown is a large part of the identity of the city. Downtown should be a diverse, multicultural environment. It should be an active, beautiful place. Downtown should be a welcome place for residents and visitors, not cars. It symbolizes



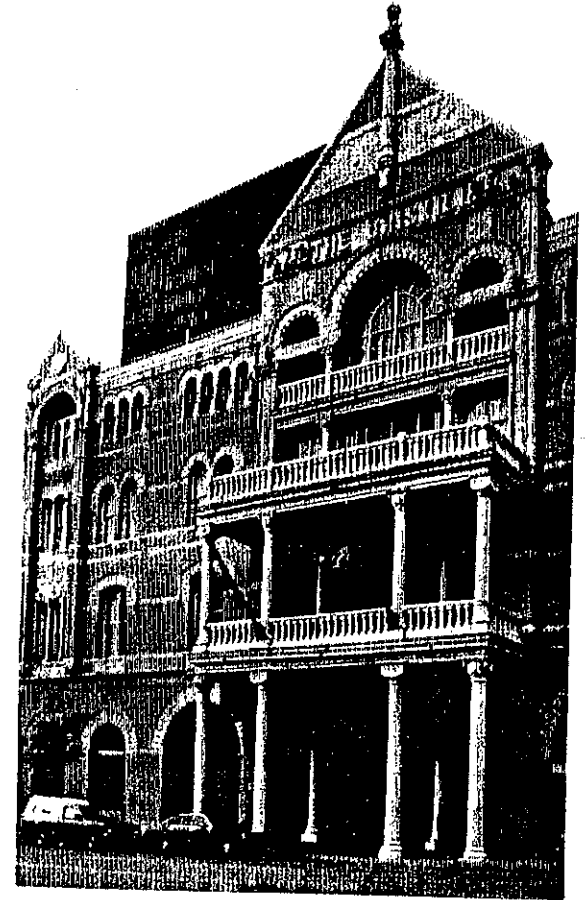
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the values you hold and tells people who you are. It is everybody's neighborhood.

2. Downtown will contain strong linkages: Downtown is now made up of disconnected centers of activity. The University campus, State office complex, downtown grid, adjacent neighborhoods and the river are disconnected. These areas are all part of downtown. But they are separated by significant barriers and function in relative isolation. These barriers must be overcome. Everything you do should be oriented to making pedestrian and shuttle/transit linkages between the University and Congress Avenue, between the Convention Center and East Sixth Street, between downtown and East Austin across IH-35, and between downtown and the river and creeks.

3. Downtown Austin should build on what already exists: Downtown Austin has many marvelous resources. These resources must be the starting point. The students, University staff and faculty, state workforce and downtown workforce represent well in excess of 100,000 people in and around the downtown everyday. The adjacent neighborhoods represent tens of thousands more people who can be served by downtown. The downtown hosts over 1.5 million visitors to the Capitol and other destinations each year, and the new Convention Center will add substantially to this number. Those people represent a market and a source of activity. In addition, Austin is home to a thriving music industry and a very active arts and cultural community. East Sixth Street, despite challenges, is a vital center for dining, entertainment and retailing. Congress Avenue is a great civic boulevard unequalled in Texas. Clubs and restaurants continue to populate the downtown area. The creeks and river provide highly accessible amenities within the downtown. Before searching for any additional activities to add to this mix, it is imperative to maximize the opportunities these existing resources provide.



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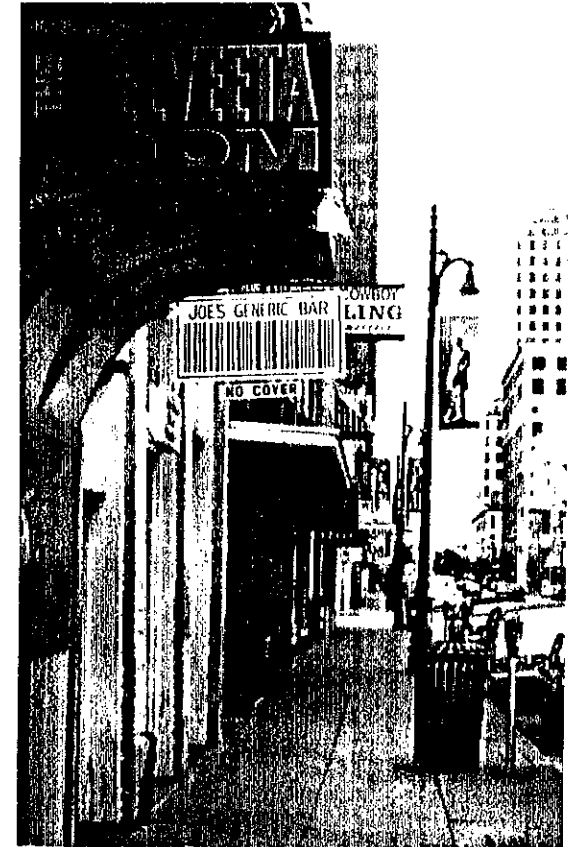
4. Downtown must be inclusive: Downtown exists for the entire community. It cannot be a resource or an economic opportunity for only part of the community. The responsibility for what happens in downtown, and the economic benefits of what is created downtown, must be shared. People in East Austin and other areas surrounding downtown need to have a share in downtown. The converse is also true. Downtown's interests **must be served and advanced by investing in the development of and linkages to areas such as East Austin.**

5. The community must be committed to downtown: Any vision for downtown is only as good as the commitment that starts behind it. Budget priorities effect that commitment. The vehicles for carrying out the program and projects you envision for downtown must be created. There must be a strong, ongoing organization of people with a stake in downtown's future prepared to advocate the steps needed and hold the appropriate people accountable for the results. There is also a need for an ordering of priorities. Everything cannot be done at once, and some things should never be done at all.

There is a need for a more explicit set of criteria for making decisions about projects and proposals for downtown. If there is a shared vision, then the first questions should always be "Does this move us closer or further away from our vision for downtown?" and "Is this more important than what we have already comitted to do?"

6. The downtown environment is as important as the bricks and mortar: A successful downtown is more than a collection of structures. More attention is needed to the total environment that is created. Downtown must be, and more importantly, must be perceived to be, safe, clean and active. The basic services needed to ensure this occurs are an essential component of the downtown program. Beyond these services, downtown must be marketed and public and private spaces programmed with activities that give people more reasons to come downtown and stay downtown.

7. Downtown must be a place that emphasizes street level activity and amenities: What matters most in downtown is the experience at street level. The connections between activity centers, the amenities provided on the street, the quality of



building facades and the patterns of circulation with downtown are all of vital importance. Every project and issue should be evaluated from this perspective. The better the experience on the street and the connections between places of activity or amenities, the better the markets that exist to support downtown can be tapped.

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8. Downtown must be thought of as a destination: Downtown is not a place that lies between IH-35 and MoPac. It is a destination. The manner in which access to and through downtown is provided is very important. The priority is making downtown a superior destination. Through traffic is of secondary importance. The downtown street grid must serve the users of downtown first. The experience in downtown will have more impact on its success than the amount of traffic moved through downtown.

9. Downtown is an economic and civic investment: The downtown area is the most important economic engine of the region. It represents a collective investment of billions of dollars in public and private funds. The resources invested by the public should produce a return that is both social and economic. The benefits should be quantifiable in terms of jobs and services provided, increased sales and increased public revenues. Each undertaking does not in itself need to be an economic generator. The overall goal, however, should be to create tangible economic benefits and opportunities for the community.

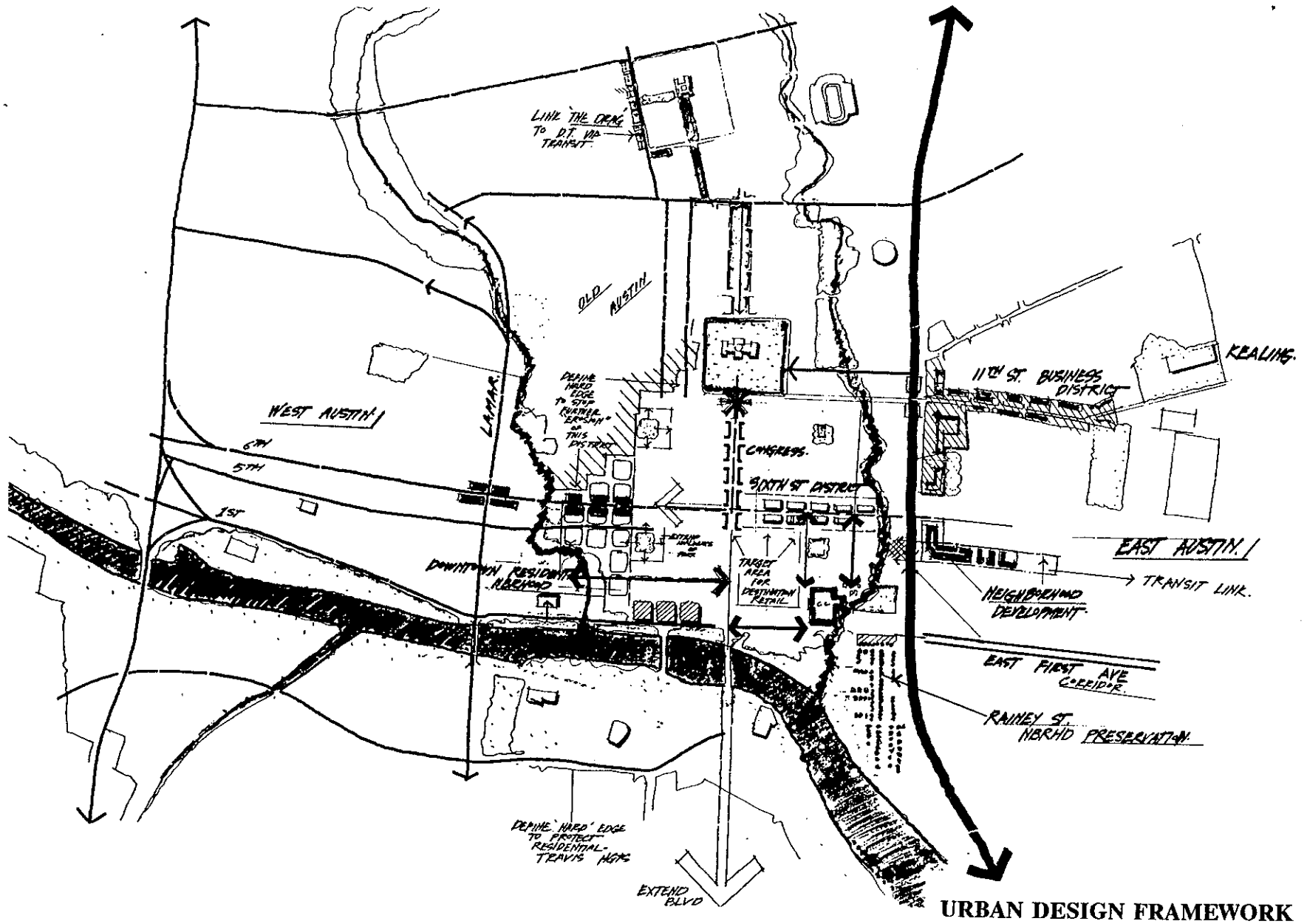
Using these basic principles, it is possible to describe a vision of Downtown Austin that can be achieved. The exact form in which it will be achieved will undoubtedly vary over time. The goal should be to continually move in directions that reinforce these basic objectives. The image of Downtown Austin that emerges is described below:

The vision described in this document includes the following elements:

- Congress Avenue is the core of the city and the heart of downtown.
- The Convention Center is connected to East Sixth Street by Trinity and Red River, to Congress Avenue by East Second Street, and to the river south of East First Street.
- Additional retail to serve the downtown workforce, State and University employees, students and adjacent neighborhoods should be developed along Congress Avenue. Ultimately, destination retail that can draw customers from throughout the region and serve tourists and convention delegates should be concentrated in the area generally bounded by Congress Avenue, East Sixth Street, Trinity Street and East Second Street.

- A shuttle and preferably trolley link should connect The University of Texas, the Capitol Complex, downtown and Town Lake.
- Additional links to Town Lake and creeks.
- No second deck on IH-35, and no additional efforts to further widen major downtown streets.
- Preservation of residential areas to the west and northwest, as well as the Rainey Street neighborhood.
- Enhancement of East Sixth Street and ultimately West Sixth Street as well.
- Meaningful linkages across IH-35 and a substantial neighborhood development program in the targeted commercial and residential areas of East Austin.
- Preservation and enhancement of the Paramount and State Theatres.
- Concentration of state and municipal employees in the downtown area to the maximum extent possible.
- Development of a private sector based downtown advocacy, service and promotion organization.
- Improved maintenance, security, public space programming and marketing.
- Development of new residential units in the southwest quadrant of the downtown.

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URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

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DOWNTOWN ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Austin business and political leaders speak almost unanimously in favor of a vital downtown center. But despite a high level of civic energy, a strong interest in results, and significant public and private investment over the years, downtown lacks a concerted voice and an agreed upon strategy to become the place it wants to be. Organization weakness, ad hoc and fragmented improvement efforts, feast or famine funding, and reluctance to intervene in the market, have contributed to stalemate and deterioration. These conditions will have to change if the vision and recommendations set out in this report are to be successfully pursued.



ORGANIZATION

Downtown Austin must have an advocate and manager that is not part of city government or the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce.

Like many cities, Austin has a plethora of organizations and agencies that are active in and on behalf of downtown. But unlike most cities of its size, achievements, and aspirations, Austin lacks a downtown organization that has the stature and resources to exercise sustained leadership of downtown revitalization efforts.

The needed organization can be formed by revamping Downtown Austin Partners or the Downtown Revitalization Committee or by folding these two groups, and possibly those convened for the Sixth Street Study, into an entirely new organization. What is important is that this new organization have the membership and responsibilities needed to take the lead role in advocating and assuring action on behalf of downtown.

Membership in a new or revamped downtown organization should be representative of all segments of the downtown business community, including property owners, retailers, the entertainment industry. East Austin, The University of Texas, and other downtown educational institutions, should also be represented.

It has been suggested that state and local governments also have direct membership in the organization. But in our view, this is one inclusive tradition that it would be desirable to break with. Consultation and coordination with government can be assured through joint task forces. It is time for the private sector to exercise leadership and responsibility on a day-to-day basis for downtown.

Task forces or committees can also respond to the specific concerns of merchants, for example, or assure overview of a Sixth Street management district.

Funding for the new organization should be reliable and longterm. Whether through dues, voluntary assessments, income from a public improvement or municipal management district, start-up funds from the university and state and local government, or a combination of these, funding should be adequate to support a small, experienced staff, an office, a year-round marketing and promotions program, and one or two downtown management initiatives (see below). St. Paul MN, receives a portion of

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income from the hotel tax to support its programs. Preferably, the founding members of the organization should commit to securing five years of support for the organization.

A minimum annual level of funding for a fully effective organization would be \$350,000. This level of support could be phased in over a two to three year period.

Responsibilities of the new organization should include:

- Development of a goals statement for downtown and prioritization of the steps needed to achieve them;
- Advocacy on behalf of downtown in political and community forums;
- Implementation of a program of marketing and promotions for downtown;
- Development and oversight of downtown management initiatives such as a retail retention and recruitment program or enhanced maintenance and security.
- Coordination of activities with the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and sponsors of major downtown festivals.
- Review of university and governmental projects affecting downtown;
- Assurance of linkages between various activity centers in downtown.
- Assurance of outreach to neighborhoods adjacent to downtown and their involvement in downtown economic life.



Before the structure of a new organization is settled, it would be useful to look at how downtown organizations work in other cities of similar size and facing similar challenges.

Clearly, priorities will have to be set among the new organization's responsibilities depending upon the level of funding. We recommend that the organization strive to do a few things well rather than attempt to meet every need. The organization will need to build support and convince doubters through a good track record.

MANAGEMENT

Downtown organizations in cities of all sizes are increasingly taking on management functions to ensure that downtown realizes its potential as an activity center and generator of economic return. This trend reflects the need to share the cost of increased downtown services as local government budgets tighten, and to tailor these services to the special needs of the area receiving them.

There are clear needs for additional services and management functions in downtown Austin. They range from more police patrols, more frequent street cleaning, better signage and more amenities in major pedestrian corridors, to more services for the homeless, management of business recruitment and retail practices such as hours, and special promotions.

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The issues are:

- How to set priorities among these needs in terms of services provided and areas served;
- Where to place the responsibility for managing these functions; and
- How to fund the cost of the services.

What and Where: An extensive and creative program of management initiatives for Sixth Street has been presented in the January 1991 Sixth Street District Master Plan. But



related needs have also been expressed for portions of Congress Avenue and other areas of the downtown.

If a choice must be made between adopting all the Sixth Street recommendations or adopting a combination of new initiatives enhancing Sixth Street, Congress Avenue and pathways to the Convention center and into East Austin, we would opt for the latter alternative.

Even if each of these places has a different theme or identity, it is important to have some continuity in amenities among areas. It is also important to create as broad a base of public support as possible for these initiatives.

Establishing priorities among potential new services is difficult particularly since each of them has a dollar cost and all of them would serve downtown well. However, the perception of a lack of security in downtown, and particularly in the Sixth Street area, is pervasive, and therefore, we would put this need at the top of the list.

WHO: The answer to this question will depend to some extent on funding arrangements. A downtown manager, supported by a management staff, can be appointed by and report to a board selected by the new downtown organization. The city government could contract with the downtown organization to provide the services and participate in oversight. Several management districts could be formed, each with its own management staff and board.

We recommend these guidelines for management structure:

- Keep it as streamlined as possible;

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

- Keep government and private sector roles as distinct as authorizing statutes and political realities will allow;
- Set up one district rather than several in the interest of preventing balkanization of the downtown; and
- Make sure that the jobless have access to employment opportunities created by new management functions.

HOW: Funding is a critical issue. It has been suggested that downtown Austin take advantage of state legislation authorizing the formation of a public improvement district or municipal management district, each of which would raise funds through special assessments on downtown properties and other mechanisms. The drawing of boundaries, the assent of owners, and various government approvals would be required. It has also been suggested that an informal district be defined and voluntary contributions sought from members of the downtown business community as an interim step toward the creation of a permanent district. Other sources of support might be start-up local government funds, parties with a special interest in improved downtown management such as The Texas University, or business community contributions.



While several Texas cities and many other cities throughout the United States have set up special assessment districts in their downtowns, we think this step may be premature for Austin.

A lot must be accomplished in coming months to prepare for the opening of the convention center and to overcome paralysis and stalemate in downtown. These efforts should not wait on the formation of a statutory district. Moreover, it is probable that support for a district would be more forthcoming once some downtown management success stories are available for telling.

In the longer run, a formal management district makes a lot of sense. The gathering of information on property values and ownership and other preliminaries should start now. It would also be good to visit cities with successful districts such as Fort Worth, Denver, Portland OR, Tulsa, New Orleans and Hartford, which has a voluntary assessment system.

MARKETING

The time is long gone when even exemplary downtowns could take their success for granted. A year-round marketing program and schedule of promotions and special events is essential if downtowns are to compete successfully for new businesses, tourists and conventioners, and the affection and patronage of their hometown residents.

Austin has splendid assets to market in its buildings, vistas, ceremonial spaces and streets, strong ethnic communities, waterways and parks, State Capitol complex and university. But marketing goes beyond advertising assets.

Attention must be paid to the quality of service given by downtown stores, transportation providers, and government employees. Signage must be checked by those not familiar with the city. Understandable information on maps and kiosks must be available. Guides to downtown stores, restaurants and entertainment must be prepared and placed in hotels and transportation centers. Downtown businesses and workers should be provided with the same information.

Special marketing efforts should be directed to state office employees and university students.

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The programming of public and private spaces needs to be arranged and coordinated with existing festivals and other outside events. Owners of successful downtown businesses should be enlisted to help recruit new businesses. Loan programs, tax abatements, and other aids to new business should be well-publicized along with basic statistical information on downtown buying habits.

In short, every downtown activity and every aspect of the downtown environment needs to be examined for its marketing potential and service quality.

Because a good marketing program is so important to a successful downtown, we recommend that marketing be made a priority function of the new downtown organization.



THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The fundamental urban design concepts that create the built form of downtown remain based on the original Edwin Waller Grid Plan of 1839. It has further evolved through time with commercial developments and the creation of use districts. Rapid changes in economics and building technology in the 1970's and 1980's have brought about significant changes in scale and land use.

FRAMEWORK OF DISTRICTS

The changes of the last two decades and an abrupt end to a cycle of real estate speculation has lead to a lack of a commonly held vision for downtown. This results in a series of unconnected "islands" or pockets of development. Downtown has many areas that are presently characterized by isolated projects between vacant, underutilized areas. It is not a comprehensive place.

New planning should adopt a realizable framework for development which emphasizes the role for downtown districts and linkages. Congress Avenue, Sixth Street, and the Convention Center are major organizing elements.

While the park and open space framework surrounding downtown is a strong organizing element, the internal pattern of public open space is not. New development should

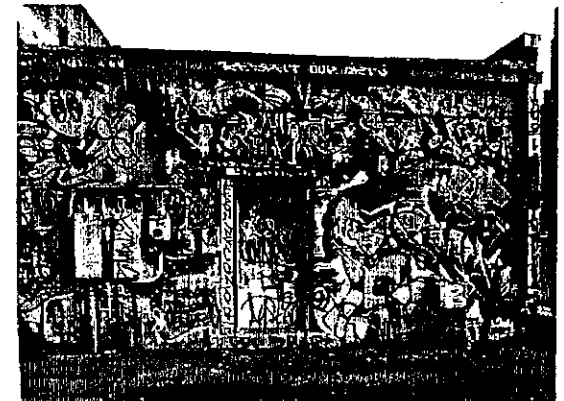
include an internal system of downtown open space that helps organize the urban form.

REGULATORY PROBLEMS

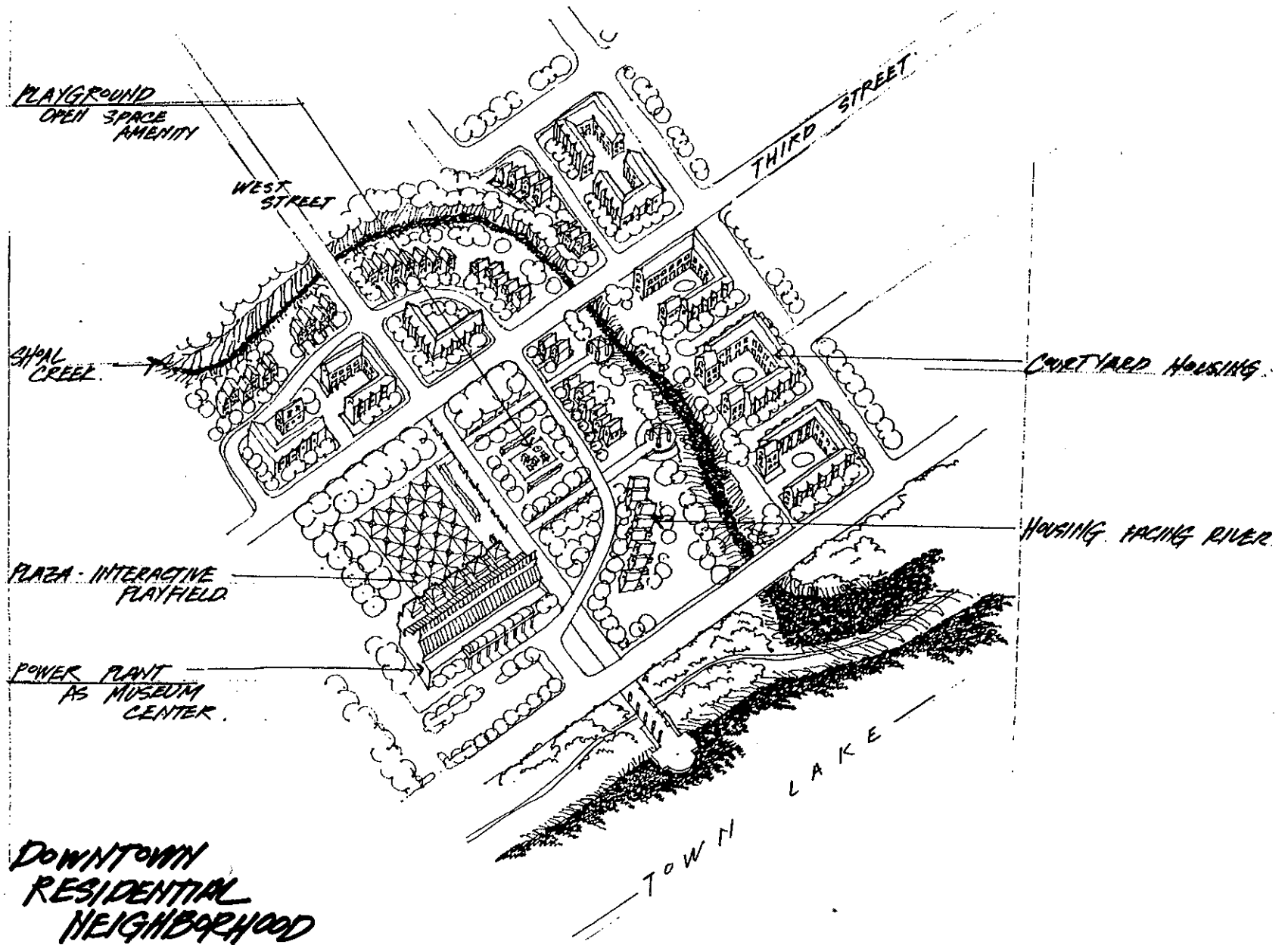
The loss of character and diversity in downtown is due in part to current regulations. The City should revise regulations to react to specific circumstances. Throw away the cookbook; design cannot be regulated. Canopies over sidewalks are an example of unique features of traditional Austin architecture not currently allowed by regulations.

Create regulations that encourage first floor activity and retail business opportunities.

Because of the significant number of historic buildings in Austin, the City should consider special building code provisions to cover these unique conditions.



DOWNTOWN AUSTIN



**DOWNTOWN
RESIDENTIAL
NEIGHBORHOOD**

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

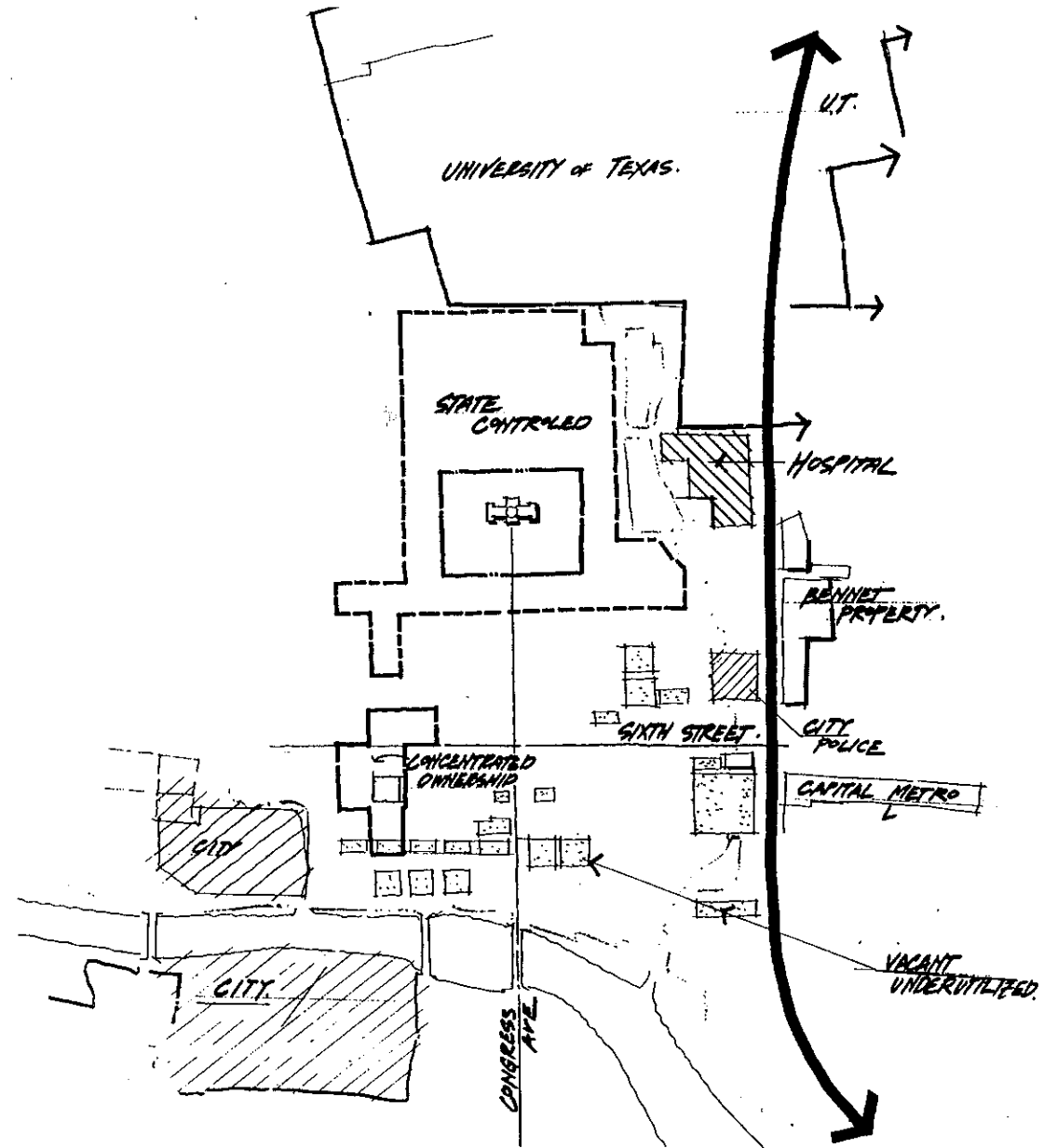
LINKAGES BETWEEN AREAS

The fragmenting of downtown is further complicated by a lack of connections between districts. The R/UDAT team strongly encourages planning proposals such as the current East Sixth Street Plan, and Trinity Street proposal for a pedestrian greenway as contained in the Convention Center proposal. These ideas help to connect the various elements in a logical framework.

TRAFFIC PATTERNS

The current pattern of one-way streets is effective at moving traffic through downtown but complicates the image and identity of streetside businesses since they can only be observed passing in one direction. This same pattern contributes to faster vehicle speeds and more real and perceived danger on the part of pedestrians.

The R/UDAT team believes that the downtown traffic patterns could be reevaluated and some one-way streets eliminated to the advantage of street level merchants and pedestrians alike. Although some efforts have been made, many Austin streets still lack pedestrian amenities that would make them comfortable pedestrian environments. Chief among these missing amenities are canopies and awnings to provide shade, wide sidewalks, trees, and street furniture.

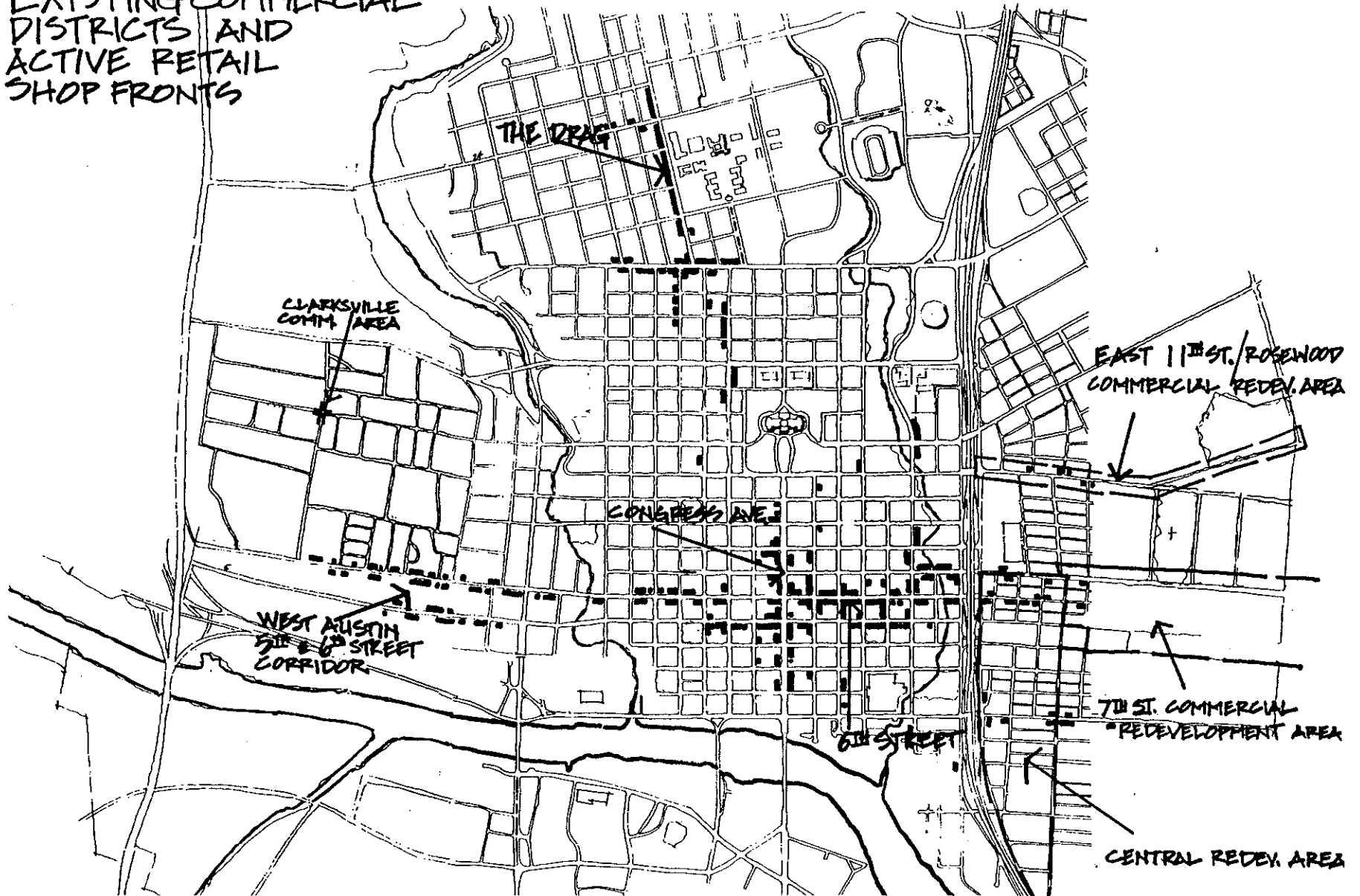


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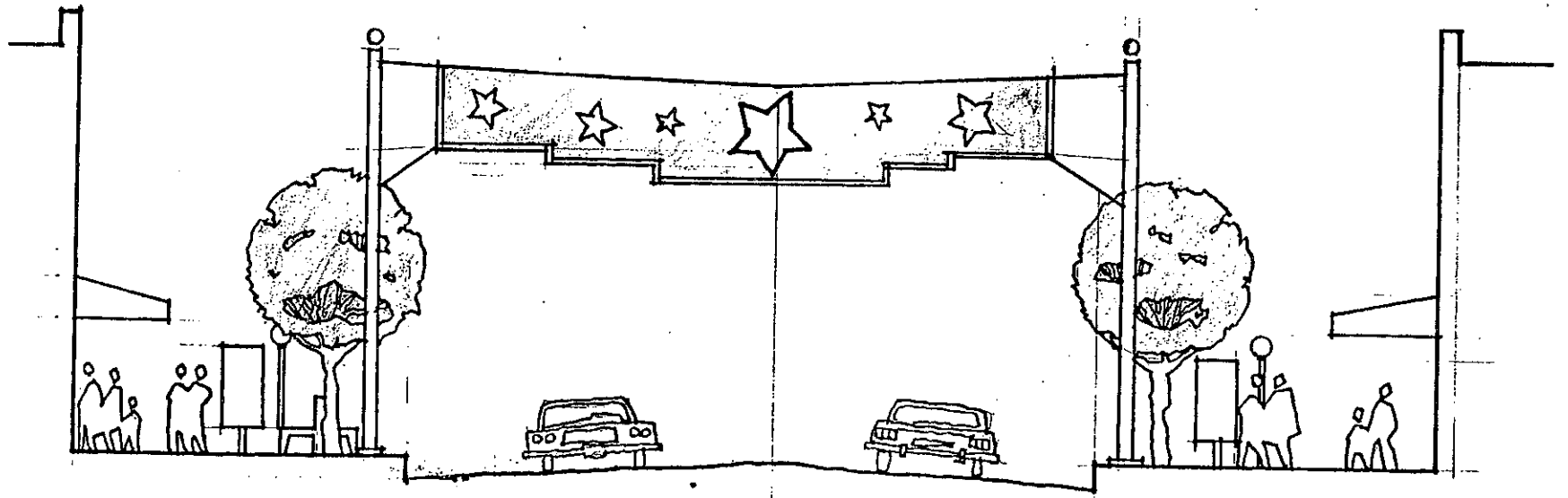
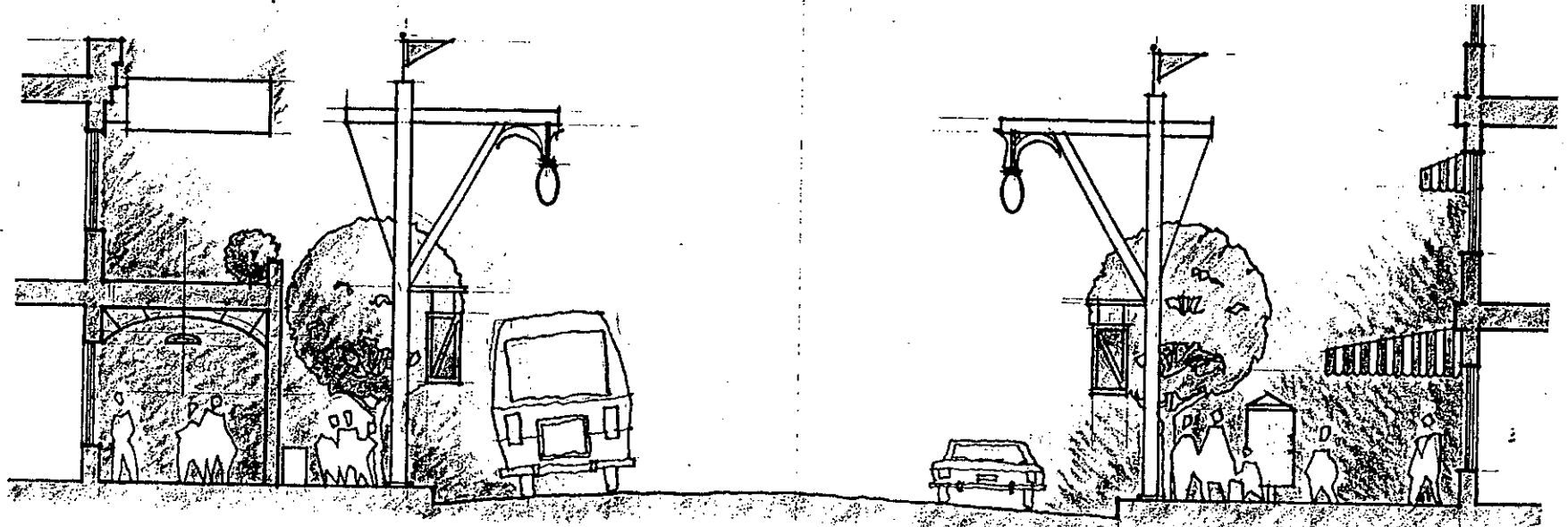


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EXISTING COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND ACTIVE RETAIL SHOP FRONTS



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THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Future downtown development should build on the already significant natural park and open space investment Austin has made at Town Lake, Shoal and Waller Creeks. Town Lake and the two creeks form a natural frame on three sides of downtown that should be enhanced and reinforced. Most of the park system on the north side of the lake has been acquired, and pathway development has already occurred along the lake and both creeks. Future emphasis in these areas should be on clean-up, repair, refinement, and access improvements that enhance an already established amenity.

Town Lake North Shore

The portion of Town Lake Park along First Street represents a major public amenity that anchors the south end of Congress Avenue. The park represent a potential retail market just as the park represents a significant amenity that can encourage future development.

Due to its potential to set the image of Downtown Austin as a world class urban place, this lakefront immediately south of downtown should receive special attention.

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department has an ongoing program of maintenance and improvements that should

be encouraged. With close proximity to hotels and the new Convention Center, this portion of the lakefront should receive the highest level of maintenance. To the extent possible, seasonal color beds, irrigated lawns, and generous pedestrian ways should be developed in anticipation of high volumes of pedestrian use. The proposal to separate bicycles from pedestrians in this area is appropriate.

Water quality and water conservation concerns dictate that irrigated lawns and plant beds in much of the Town Lake Park system be kept to a minimum. We believe that the special urban character of the downtown area make it an exception. Measures should obviously be taken to minimize environmental impacts, but the quality of site improvements and grounds maintenance in this area should be the best available.

There will no doubt continue to be many proposals for civic buildings and institutions on the lake shore in years to come. In general, we believe Austinites should be very careful in evaluating these proposals. The lakefront should be preserved and enhanced as a unique feature with a natural attractiveness that contrasts with urban landscapes.

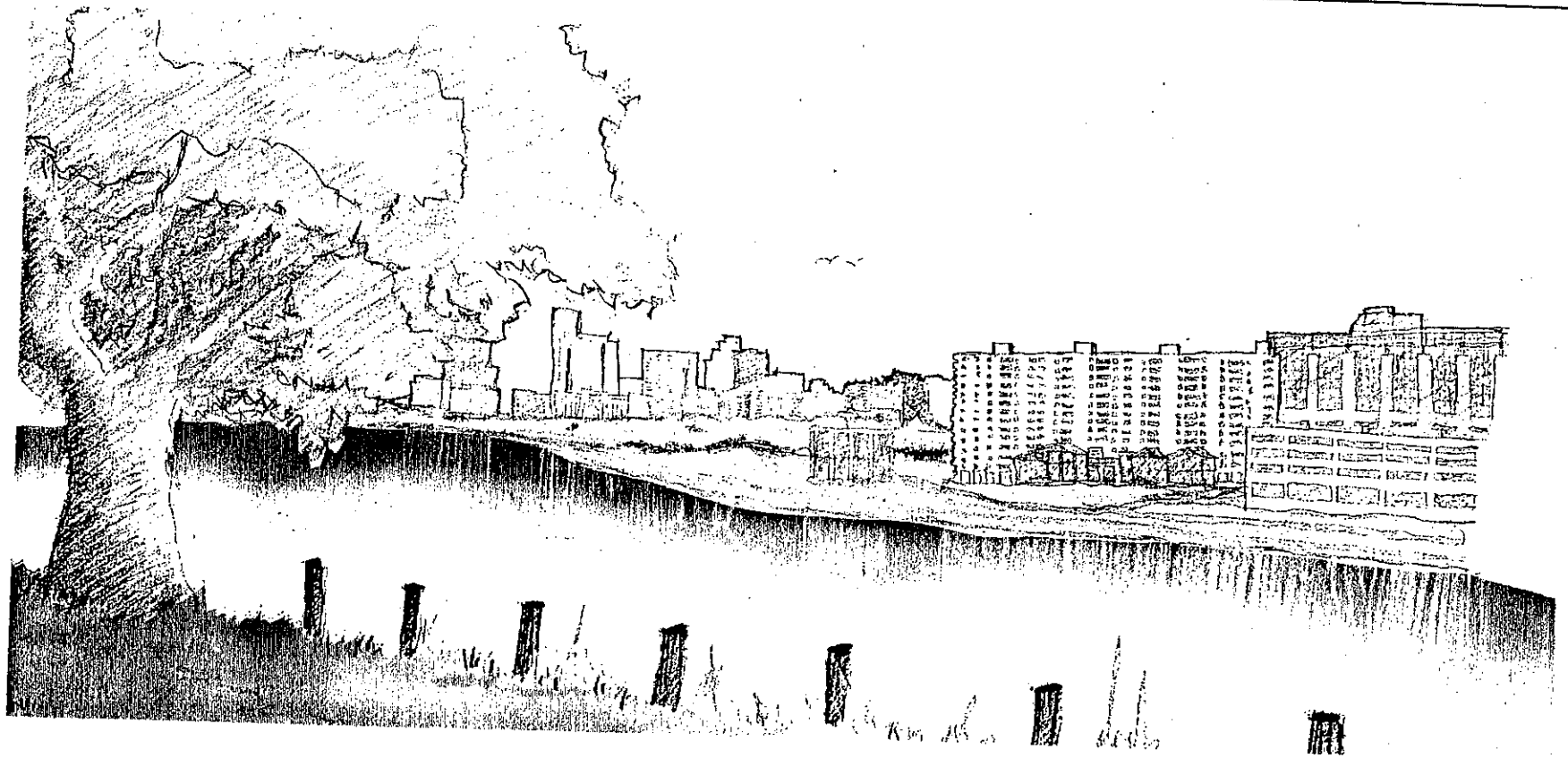
Power Plant Site

Current proposals for adaptive reuse of the City power plant building should be encouraged. In addition to providing an opportunity for a new civic facility, this proposal would enhance the long term vitality of the lakefront. These proposals would allow expansion of the lakefront park property, and would expand opportunities to redevelop Shoal Creek and other City properties.

Town Lake South Shore

Although the R/UDAT team did not look at the south shore opposite downtown in detail, we believe the City should continue to focus on shoreline acquisition and access development in these areas and ultimately complete the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan. The inclusion of a substantial lakefront loop walking, running, and cycle path will be helpful in attracting visitors to Downtown Austin, as well as serving local residents and workers. We were impressed with the scope of the entire park system and the civic support it receives.

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Waller Creek

While significant improvements have occurred on Waller Creek over the past decade, the new Convention Center will increase public exposure to this important pedestrian corridor. The Convention Center construction itself necessitates development of pathways and terraces along the creek. These will be developed as part of the Convention Center, and should be of a

quality consistent with previous creek development. Park development is proposed to the north on both sides of the creek in the District Design Guidelines for the Convention Center. These spaces should be developed to some minimum level prior to opening of the Center in the summer of 1992. Near term improvements to the park, creeks, and trail need not be expensive or sophisticated, but must provide

a clean and presentable appearance that enhances the Convention Center's setting.

The park space north of the Convention Center has the additional potential to be used as part of an access corridor linking downtown and the Convention Center to commercial development on the old rail yard property just east of IH-35.

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Several sites immediately upstream from the Convention Center have the potential for future private development. These sites should be cleaned up and minor improvements to the pathway system should be made prior to Convention Center opening. Longer term permanent improvements to the stream corridor should be done in conjunction with adjacent development. Building permit review requirements for projects developed along Waller Creek should include design review for creekside improvements by the Parks and Recreation Department. Ultimately a clearly defined public access right-of-way should be established along both sides of the creek.

To insure a safe and pleasant Waller Creek corridor, physical improvements should include better lighting, some pruning, regrading, and tree removal to insure good visibility, and more intensive police patrols and enforcement of vagrancy laws.

Shoal Creek

Like Waller Creek, Shoal Creek has received some development in the past, and now provides a "hike and bike" trail connection from the Town Lake to the University area. Less development of the creek bed itself has occurred in the past, and channel modifications, bank improvements and trail improvements are

needed. These need not be substantial and/or expensive in the near term. Longer range permanent improvements should be done in conjunction with redevelopment of adjacent properties. Redevelopment of the City power plant site would allow significant stream bank modifications that would improve the creek.

Water Quality Issues

Water quality and flood control, are issues that have been studied and discussed in the past. Appropriate answers to most questions are known, but implementation is elusive. While pumping of supplemental water from Town Lake to the headwaters of both creeks would be desirable from both a visual and environmental standpoint, first cost and operating costs appear to be high and not a funding priority in the near future. Small weirs and dams have been used with some success on Waller Creek and could be used more extensively on both creeks if properly engineered. Frequent stream bed cleanup, hardening of erosion areas, regrading of banks, and lining of channels with appropriately sized stone are also appropriate strategies.

Proper engineering of stream sections and weirs is of course necessary, and some flood control can be achieved in doing so. Storm water retention and filtration requirements currently being considered, may need to have special provisions that recognize the



problems of high density urban development in downtown projects. For many of these projects, impact fees may be more appropriate than on-site mitigation.

It is possible that future channel improvement could include facilities for removing floating debris, and some form of bio-filtration to remove chemical contaminants may be possible where creeks enter the lake.

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

REGULATION AND GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES

This section discusses the comprehensive plan for downtown and land use regulations.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City of Austin has prepared a number of reports applicable to the Central Business District. These include at least the following:

Town Lake Comprehensive Plan (adopted)

Sector I Land Use Plan of Austinplan (In review)

Sixth Street District Master Plan (In review)

Convention Center Design Guidelines (Accepted)

Waller Creek Development Plan

This R/UDAT Study has reviewed those plans and the recommendations contained here reflect many of those ideas.

In addition, The University of Texas and the State Capitol complex have master plans. It does not appear that these plans have been coordinated. It is important that future

decisions by these governmental agencies be supportive of each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Austin should complete a comprehensive land use and urban design plan for the downtown as quickly as possible to assure a common policy and plan. It appears most of the background work is complete. This sector plan should be coordinated with the State and the University with particular emphasis on issues which complement the vision presented for the downtown.

REGULATIONS

The downtown area of Austin is controlled by a number of zoning districts although the two primary ones are the Central Business District (CBD) and Downtown Mixed Use (DMU) Zone. A number of overlay zones apply to specific areas including:

- Capitol Dominance (CD) related to the State Capitol Building.
- Congress Avenue (CA) related to Congress Avenue from the Capitol to Town Lake
- Sixth/Pecan Street (PS) related to Sixth Street from Congress to IH-35.

- Downtown Parks (DP) related to Republic and Brush Squares.
- Downtown Creeks (DC) related to Shoal and Waller Creeks,
- Waterfront Overlay (WO) related to Town Lake.

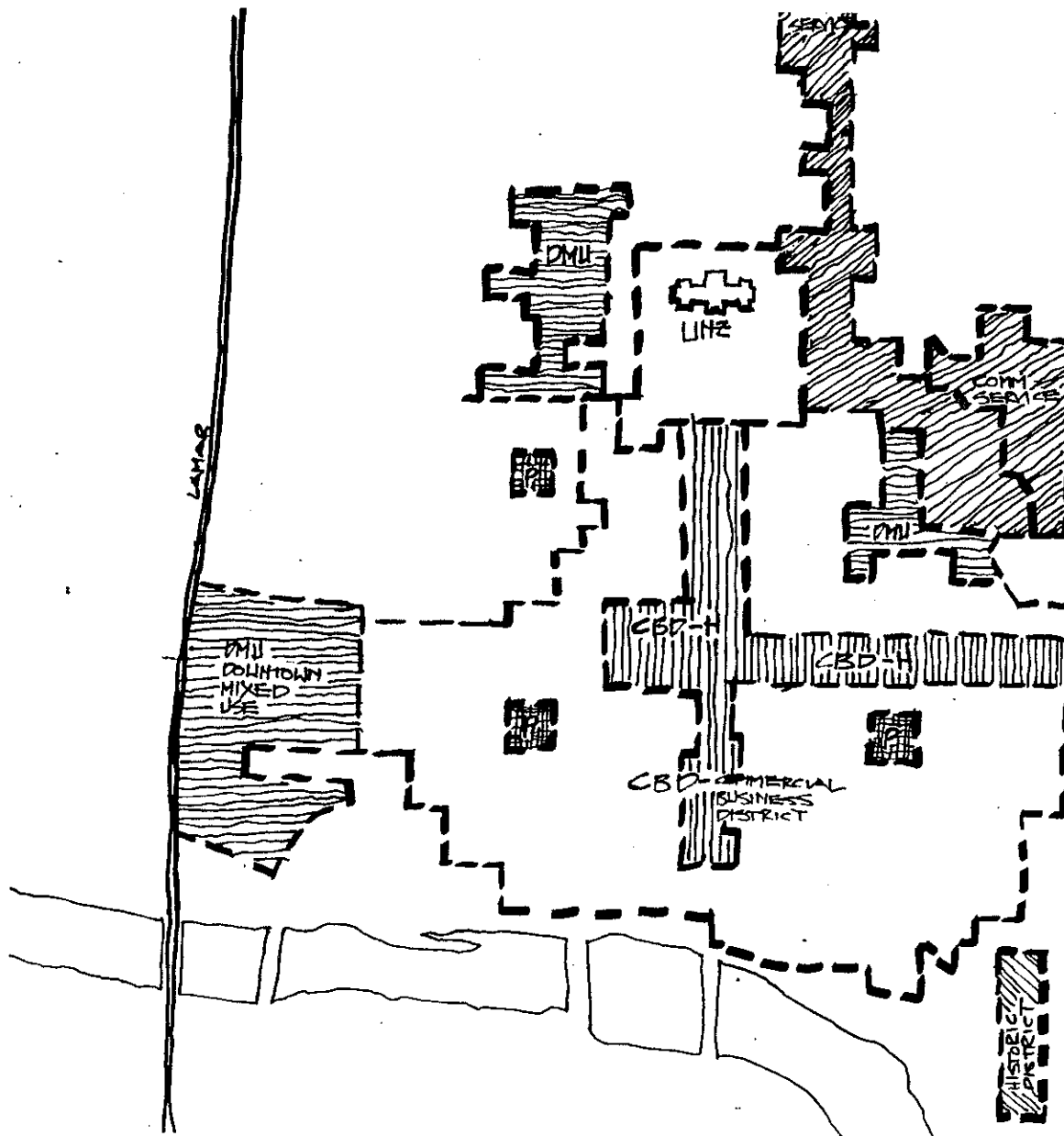
Other zoning districts applicable in the downtown area include:

- SF3 Single Family
- MF3/MF4 Multiple Family Residential
- LO Limited Office
- GO General Office
- GR Community Commercial
- CS Commercial Services
- CS1 Bars and Lounges
- LI Limited Industrial
- P Public
- H Historic Building/Site

State properties are generally unzoned and shown as UNZ.

The following map shows that a majority of the downtown is zoned CBD with smaller areas of DMU and areas of a number of small zones at the edge of the CBD.

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Old West Austin: The objective in this area is to preserve the residential scale and quality as well as allow a mix of uses including residential. The Limited Office (LO), General Office (GO) and General Commercial (CS) Districts do not allow residential uses. This should be modified.

Overlay Districts: The overlay districts previously identified apply to the Central Business District and the Downtown Mixed Use District. These require a review process; however, they are reviewed against general performance criteria. It is recommended that specific urban design guidelines be prepared for each of those Overlay Districts.

Specific suggestions which should be incorporated as soon as possible for these include the following and are simply the most obvious:

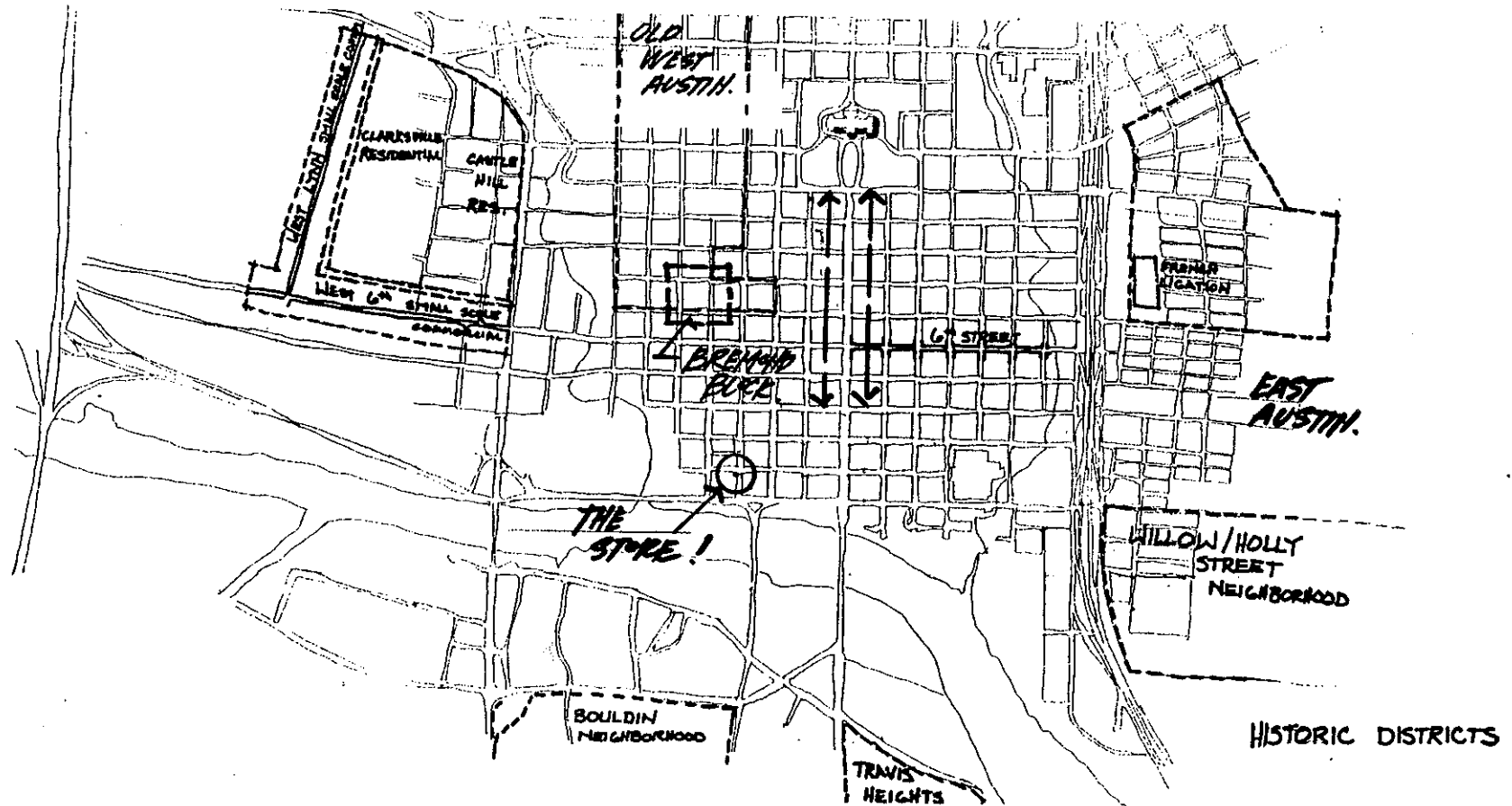
Capitol Dominance (CD)

- Detail treatment of State owned property on 11th Street at Congress Avenue.

Congress Avenue (CA)

- Maintain continuity of street facades at the property line with canopies covering the sidewalk.
- Require retail uses on a majority of the street frontage in each block.

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Sixth/Pecan Street (PS)

- Incorporate design recommendations of the Sixth Street Study.

Downtown Parks (DP)

- Include all downtown squares.

- Include the entire half block adjacent to each square into the district.

Downtown Creeks (DC)

- Evaluate if 60 feet from the centerline is adequate, increase if necessary.

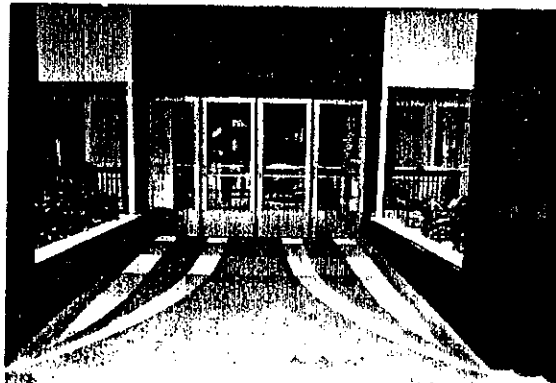
Downtown Urban Design Guidelines

An overall urban design plan and guidelines should be prepared integrating many of those currently adopted or under review. Recommended changes to the current districts should be held up until these guidelines are prepared and adopted.

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MARKETS AND ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

Downtown's economic potential goes far beyond the hoped for recovery of the real estate and banking industries. But it is difficult to quantify this assertion without detailed information on downtown's various markets, current and projected demand for and supply of goods and services. Indeed, one of the first tasks of a new downtown organization should be to sponsor a comprehensive market analysis for downtown including interviews and focus groups with students and downtown employees. The information gathered through this analysis should be used in promotional materials and in targeted efforts to attract promising businesses in other parts of the metropolitan area and to encourage the formation of new businesses.



A second important effort should target minority business entrepreneurs and help them take advantage of business opportunities in the downtown. Existing and new small business aids, such as revolving loan programs, should be packaged to accomplish this objective.

Retailing is in many respects the most important land use in a downtown, and one of the most difficult to attract and maintain. The task is further complicated by the fact that retailing as an industry is undergoing radical changes. Traditional notions about the types of stores the public desires and the types of locations that can succeed are constantly evolving.

Downtown Austin is in desperate need of a stronger retail base. Existing retailers are suffering and the variety of merchandise available is inadequate to attract downtown and State employees, students, nearby residents or visitors.

In pursuing options to strengthen downtown retail, Austin residents must be realistic. The level of competition in the regional market is significant. Shopping malls such as Barton Creek, the Arboretum, Highland Mall and specialty shops scattered throughout the area provide readily accessible alternatives to downtown. Overall, there is still a surplus of retail space in the regional market, although actual vacancy rates vary by type of retail.

It is also important to point out how sensitive retailing is to the quality of the surrounding environment. An employee may **have** to go to work in his downtown office but no one **has** to patronize a downtown merchant. Concerns about the convenience, safety and cleanliness of retail locations can absolutely mean the difference between a location that is viable and one that is not. The mixed quality of the downtown retail environment in this respect is one of its significant disadvantages.

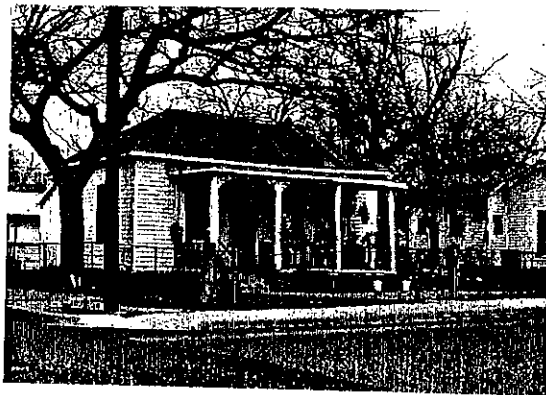


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Despite a relatively soft retail market, there still may be areas of opportunity for downtown. The most immediate goal should be to fill available space on Congress Avenue and East Sixth Street with uses that seek to serve the existing downtown market (workforce, students, visitor, close-in residents). The success of such an effort will depend in large part on the ability to increase available foot traffic on these key streets with better shuttle/transit connections and streetscape improvements.

In the long run, downtown needs more than convenience retailing serving the local market if it is to compete successfully in the regional market. In order to serve visitors and convention delegates, and to draw shoppers from the entire regional market, downtown will need to provide a concentration of specialty retail tenants that is unique in the market. The ideal location for such retail is in the area generally north and west of the Convention Center. The closer it can be located to the southeast side of the intersection of Congress Avenue and East Sixth Street, the more effective it will be in serving the entire downtown market during the day and night. This location will also help to reinforce the activity that currently exists on the two most important streets in downtown.

Development of downtown retailing capable of serving as a destination for shopping trips from throughout the region will not be easy. In today's market and given the current condition of downtown retailing and the overall downtown environment, it may not be possible. Still, the City should move toward this objective.



It may well be that a significant new retail base in the area near East Sixth Street and Congress Avenue can never be developed without some form of public financial participation in the project. Few major retail projects have been undertaken in American downtowns in recent years without public participation. Austin must be prepared to consider this possibility. The decision should be guided by the extent of financial participation required versus the extent of the financial benefits returned to the city.

The city must also come to grips with the reality that additional retail space added on the periphery of downtown and beyond can further reduce opportunities for downtown retail. With respect to retail tenants who can serve the needs of visitors and draw from a large part of the regional market, the City and the downtown community should make every effort to attract these tenants to downtown locations.

Other steps to protect and enhance downtown retail would go beyond a targeted recruitment effort to enlist the active cooperation of property owners in holding out for tenants that complement the desired retail mix. Downtown organizations in a number of other cities have successfully used financial incentives to encourage such selectivity on the part of owners. They have also encouraged owners and downtown retailers to promote more commonality in hours and other retailing practices.

It is probably too early given current conditions in Austin's downtown retailing to seek adoption of these forms of owner and retailer cooperation. Nevertheless, Sixth Street, with its concentration of businesses, offers a potential site for eventual testing and adoption of these promising management techniques in Austin.

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FRAMEWORK FOR NEIGHBORHOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The R/UDAT team endorses a philosophy of greater involvement of all Austin residents in the development of Downtown, and particularly development within the neighborhoods.

There are several tools and resources that must be used to enable the minority community to build capacity. These include: technical assistance programs linked to UT business school, and its real estate development courses, land value write downs utilizing publicly owned property, grant funds for market and feasibility evaluations, and greater involvement and the development of community based non profit housing and economic developers. The minority communities must work together if they are to secure public support for a city wide neighborhood, economic development program.

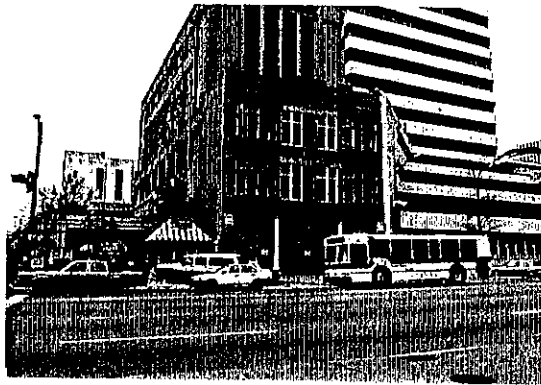
Furthermore, we have recommended the development of housing in the downtown core and within designated neighborhood development sites, as we believe this will enhance the City's diversity, develop a market for goods and services, and help to insure the success of an active downtown center.

TRANSPORTATION

"Streets are for people"

Through the use of the automobile and in the planning for transportation and highway improvements downtown is being destroyed. The Austin residents love with the personal mode of transportation has over the years caused planning to ignore the downtown as a destination place, and all efforts and capital expenditures are focusing on how to improve ways to circulate around and through downtown.

Planning for transportation as a component of the development of an active and vibrant downtown must begin with the premise that "streets are for people". The focus must shift from how to get people efficiently across town, to how can we encourage people to stop, shop, and spend time downtown.



Some of the plans in discussion and action by the City and State that are contributing to this attitude toward downtown are:

1. Proposed improvements to interstate I-35 which calls for double decking the existing expressway, doubling its capacity.

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2. The conversion of local downtown streets into a network of one way pairs.
3. An interconnecting East/West Highway that connects I-35 to MoPac, which would create another visual and physical barrier to Town Lake and would act to encircle the City on three sides with Highways.
4. Lack of a comprehensive parking plan, which incorporates the plans of all of the actors involved with parking and transportation; Capital Metro, City Department of Public Works and Transportation, Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation, City Planning and Development Department, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, and the University of Texas at Austin.

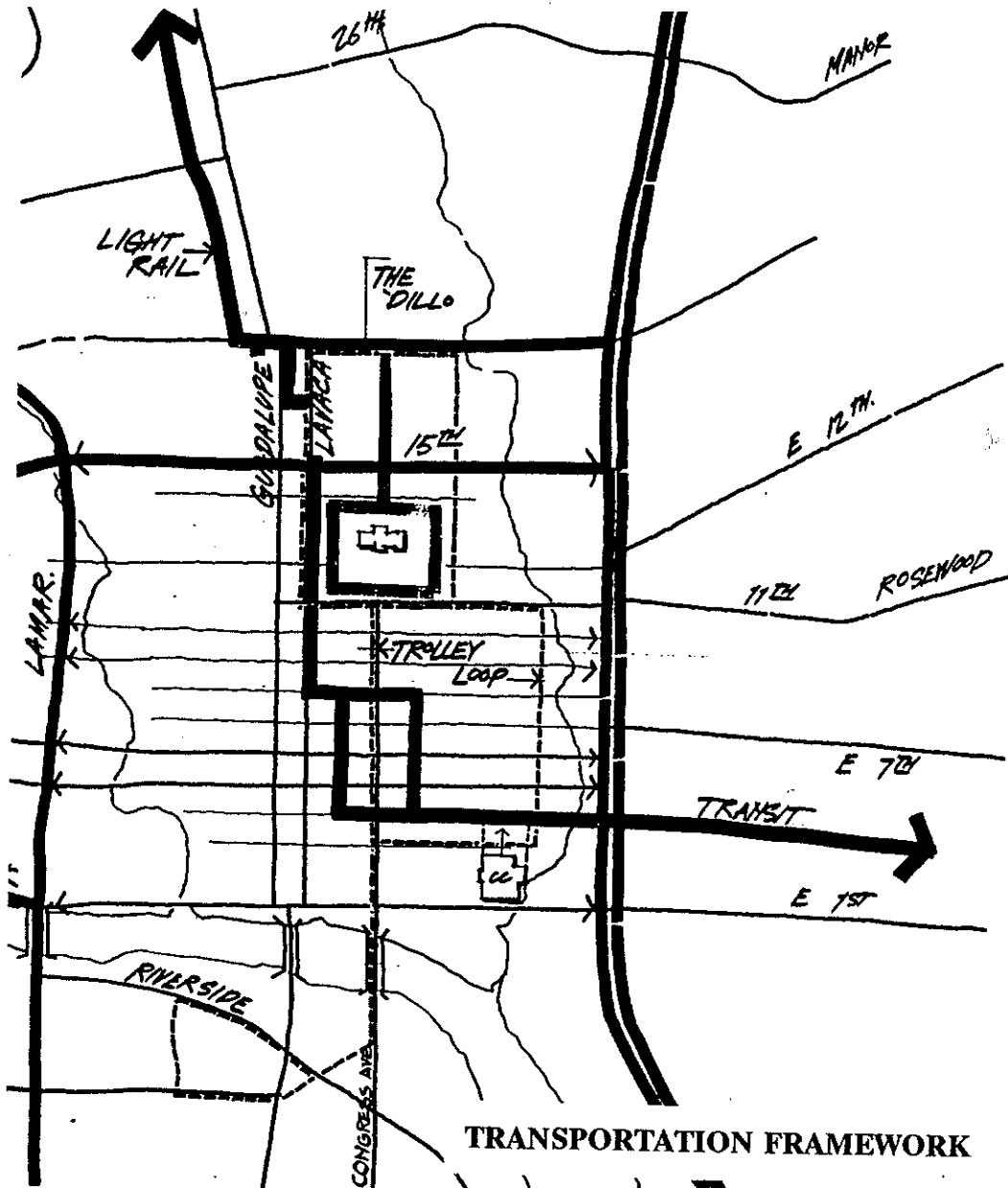
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. I-35 improvements should be limited to possible upgrading of the existing structure without major land acquisitions. The State should abandon the plan for double decking the expressway. Any expansion which would further add to the barrier which now separates East Austin from the rest of downtown, goes contrary to linking neighborhoods to the heart of the City.



2. Streets in downtown should be designed to slow down traffic and to integrate vehicle traffic better with pedestrian traffic. A network of streets should be changed to accommodate two way traffic. 6th Street should be immediately converted to two way traffic.
3. Any East/West connector should be accommodated by improved local streets. Adequate East/West routes appear to exist by the use of First street and Route 290 Ben White Blvd. and the downtown street grid.
4. Develop a parking management plan by the end of 1991 that can be implemented in time for the opening of the convention center.

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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Dillo

The dillo system compliments the historic features of downtown and the neighborhoods and adds a wonderful flavor and character to the City as a whole. The Dillo system needs to be run using fixed routes, and should be expanded to include a "Historic Loop" which circulates around downtown making connections to the Convention Center, The Hotels, the State Capitol complex, The University, and Congress Ave. across Town Lake over the Congress Street bridge to the Palmer Auditorium site.

Buses

An extensive bus system serves downtown very well with frequent service and short headways. It is wonderful to be able to stand down one of the avenues and see the follow on bus coming behind the bus you are waiting for.

Light Rail Vehicles

The City is to be complimented for its Positive action to go forward on the development and planning of a fixed rail system of public transportation.

Alignment of the Light rail vehicle can be a catalyst for the development of downtown and the surrounding smaller neighborhood retail centers.

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The systems alignment must also tie into a larger plan for the servicing the City as a whole. Care must be taken to avoid an alignment that ignores the importance of Congress Ave. the State Capitol, the Commercial district, the Convention Center, and the University.

The planning for the Light Rail must be tied to a master plan alignment which allows for future expansion of the system to areas and neighborhoods beyond. Capital Metro must work toward establishing and fixing the alignments of the East/West, and the North/South routes, with full public input, concurrent with its efforts to implement its phase one.

The planning for Light Rail must be developed with a broader attitude toward parking that speaks to downtown needs, University of Texas needs, and commuter parking needs. Capital Metro must step up its efforts to encourage the use of public transit and develop a plan for collector parking on the out skirts of the Downtown at the terminus of the line. Marketing must be improved and aggressively pursued that compliments this approach to parking.

East Austin Link.

The connection of downtown to the East Austin neighborhood can be reinforced by the proposed alignment of the Light Rail system. The location of a Maintenance of Way terminal in this area however, must be carefully located to reduce the impact on local neighborhoods and so as not to obstruct the potential to link East Austin to Downtown. Its location should be looked at closest to the Capital Metro facility, furthest east to avoid deadheading of vehicles back through the neighborhoods at the end and beginning of operations.

The East Austin Link must be located along the railroad right of way with the intention of providing full service to the East Austin community with frequent stops and adequate headways.



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Capital Metro should implement the "Downtown Historic Loop" by use of the Dillo as a plan that can be put in service by 1992 consistent with the opening of the Convention Center. A Further upgrade of this system by using a Trolley can be developed as time will allow.
2. Capital Metro should move expeditiously to have its first phase light rail vehicle system operational by the year 1995.
3. Capital Metro must begin to look at the economic development potential of the East Austin Link. A development partnership which provides an equity position for the community in this area will help to revitalize a major section of the City.

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

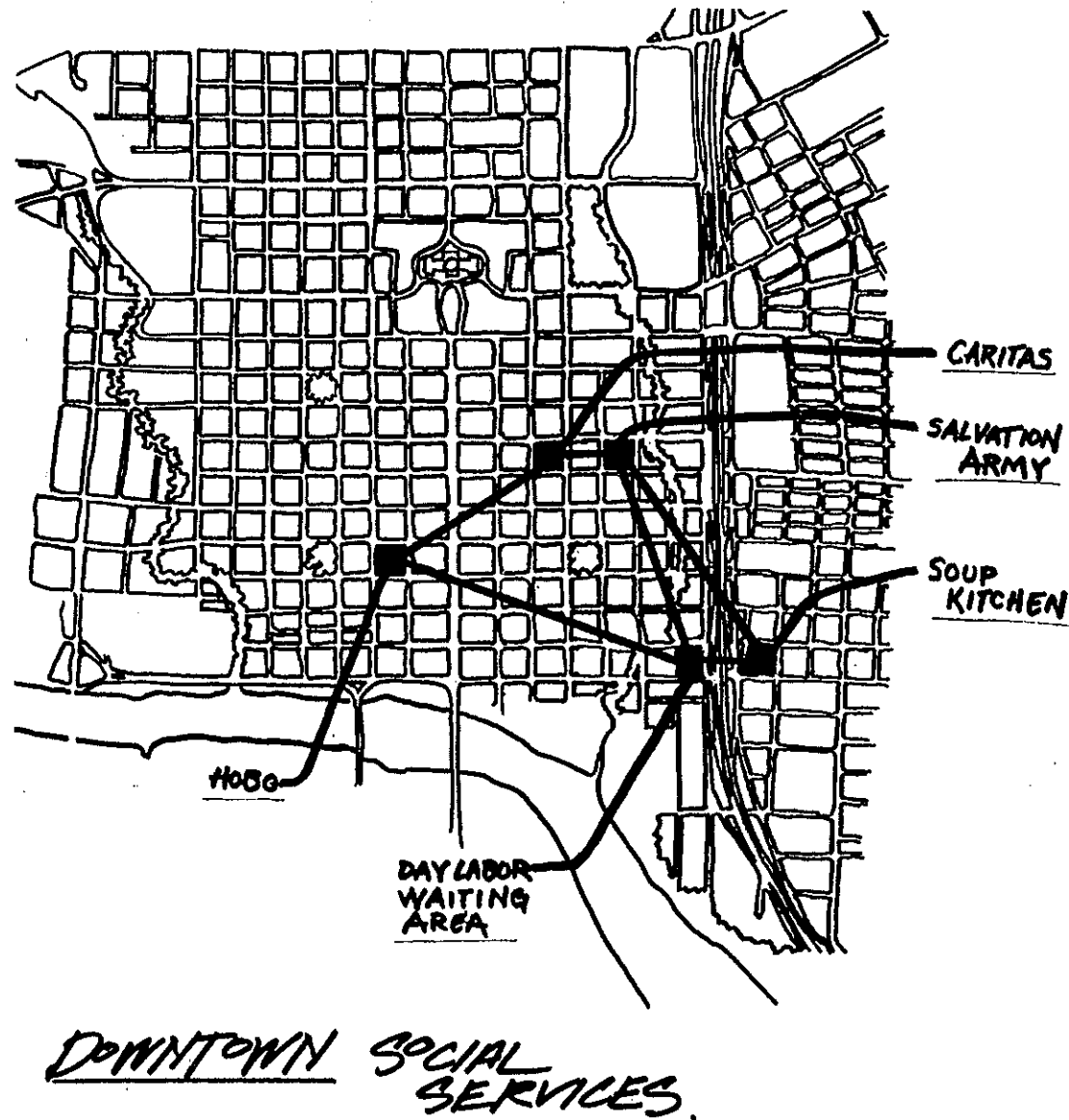
HUMAN SERVICES

This section deals with three major and interrelated issues:

- Homeless and Transients;
- Public Safety; and
- Sanitation.

Homeless and Transients

The problem of the homeless and transients in the City of Austin is one shared by all other major cities in this country. Within Austin, this problem is compounded because the locations of the agencies providing services and the existing and future areas of high pedestrian/tourism activity (East 6th Street and Convention Center) create a direct conflict. The following diagram shows how the agency locations (Salvation Army, HOBO, Caritas and the Soup Kitchen) with the necessity that the homeless travel between them to get service, directly overlap Sixth Street and the Convention Center.



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The Sixth Street District Master Plan "considers the homeless to be centrally responsible for many of the problems" on Sixth Street. There is also concern that their presence will adversely affect the Convention Center.

Other issues related to the chronically homeless is that many have serious health problems, are alcoholic, drug addicts or mentally ill and are unable to improve their situation without assistance. If they are arrested for creating a disturbance, they are quickly released due to the lack of inadequate mental health and substance abuse facilities. It is understood that there are three proposals for such a facility by the State Department of Justice, Travis County and the City of Austin.

Also related to this is the lack of availability of inexpensive housing (single room occupancy) and transitional housing which provides counselling and job placement. This type of housing is essential in a comprehensive program to return some portion of this homeless population to productive life styles.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the three jurisdictions work with proposals together to provide a comprehensive mental health and alcohol/drug rehabilitation center with a

related transitional housing program. In addition, it may be advantageous to relocate the HOB0 operation in closer proximity to the Salvation Army to reduce a portion of the conflict with Sixth Street as well as to coordinate programs.

Also, the Salvation Army must be looked at to see if their hours can be adjusted so that all the occupants are not on the street at 7 a.m. Their program should be coordinated with and detoxification and mental health center.

Public Safety

The primary issue related to public safety is that of police protection in downtown and areas of high pedestrian activity such as Sixth Street. The assignment of walking patrols on Sixth Street is sporadic and they are often reassigned to trouble spots. It is perceived that the police leave at 2:00 a.m. at a time when the potential for trouble is greatest.

Another complaint we received about Sixth Street is that the police often barricade the street on normal weekend nights. (It is acceptable for safety purposes on high volume weekends, e.g., Halloween, New Years Eve, etc.) This not only removes the traffic which is part of the activity of the area, but also reinforces the question of patrons regarding safety. In some cases, it

actually eliminates business activity due to lack of accessibility.

Recommendations:

Form a special police district for the downtown "neighborhood" and recognize its unique characteristics and its importance in the economic vitality of the entire city.

Provide twenty-four hour patrols along Sixth Street and its immediate vicinity with consideration of all users of the street: residents, retail shops, restaurants, entertainment and visitors. Examine new barricade areas after East Sixth Street improvements are in place.

Street Cleaning and Garbage Collection

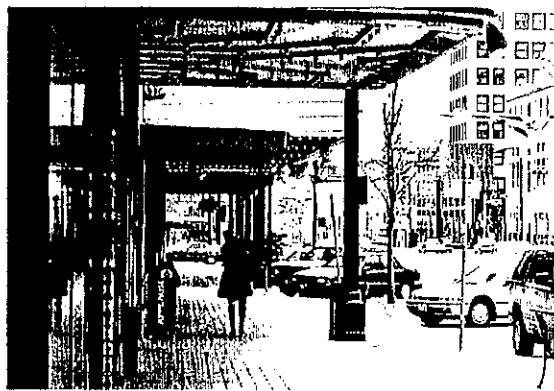
Although we received some comment on the issue of street cleaning and garbage collection this does not appear to be as high a priority. It is important that the City and merchants increase their awareness of the need to maintain a clean, attractive downtown as the number of visitors and tourists increases with the opening of the Convention Center and the refurbishing of the State Capitol.

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

RELATIONSHIPS AND LINKAGES

Downtown Austin is comprised of a series of significant entities that represent the full range of Texas history, culture, politics and economics. Each has unique strengths that can be utilized in improving downtown:

- **The University of Texas**, a nationally respected higher education institution with 50,000 students and 10,000 faculty and staff serving not only local, but international education and research.
- **The State Capitol**, seat of government, employer of approximately 10,000 workers, headquarters of numerous State agencies.



- **A regional business and banking center** located within the business district.
- **A music and entertainment center** serving a regional and national market.
- **A series of in-town neighborhoods** that provide close-in living opportunities, historic character and charm, and ethnic diversity.

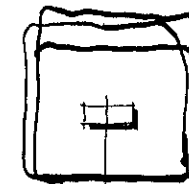
Downtown should be the connecting link in this dynamic. It has the potential to be the confluence of activity and interaction between these elements.

CONGRESS AVENUE

From the initial planning of the city, Congress Avenue has been a physical and symbolic link between the Capitol and the river. The powerful symbolism presented by the view up Congress Avenue is no doubt the image of Austin in the minds of most visitors. The street itself is an address of note, and a prestigious location for both offices and retail shops.

Town Lake and the Capitol Grounds are features that play host to thousands of tourists and Austinites. Past planning has always strived to preserve the Capitol view.

In addition to this view, the R/UDAT team believes that a unique transit vehicle such as the proposed historic trolley traveling at frequent regular intervals and charging little or no fare, has the potential to bring University students and Capitol employees through downtown, enlivening the district, improving the retail environment, and providing access to the lakefront. The recent acquisition of office space at the south end of downtown, and concurrent proposals for light rail transit make this idea ever more compelling.



Congress Ave

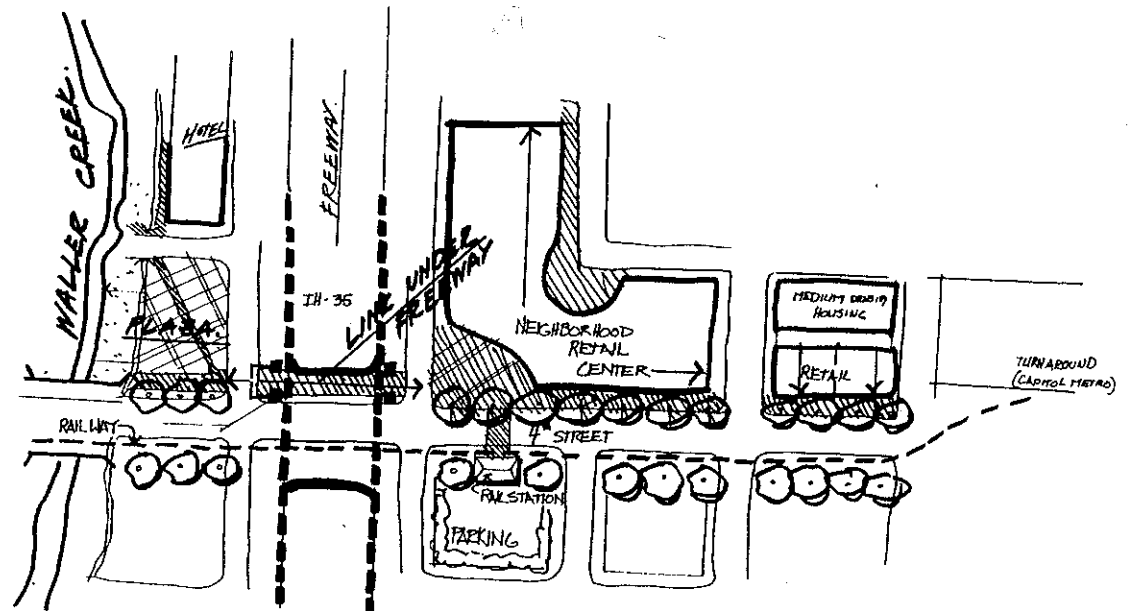
6th Street

Convention Center

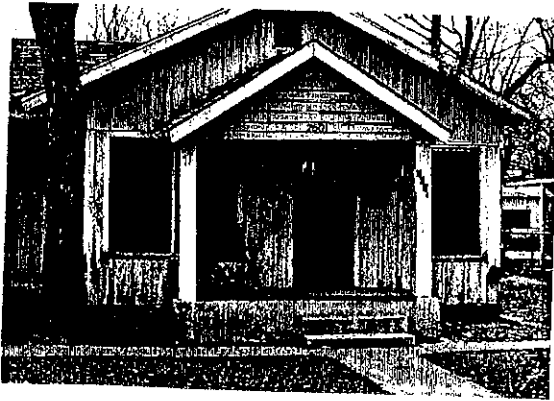
DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

THE CAPITOL AND THE UNIVERSITY

With the completion of the new office addition to the north of the State Capitol building, an opportunity presents itself to create a strong pedestrian corridor north to the University of Texas campus. This avenue should provide both a symbolic and physical connection between the two institutions. In order to achieve the vision of this project, substantial tree plantings and pedestrian improvements are needed to reduce the impact of the large buildings and parking garages of the north Capitol Campus. This connector would meet The University of Texas Campus at Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard which could also be a stop for the historic trolley.



EAST AUSTIN DEVELOPMENT



EAST AUSTIN

The R/UDAT Team has been impressed with the concern voiced throughout the weekend regarding the lack of linkage between, downtown and the East Austin neighborhoods. In frequent discussions, we

were reminded of the extent to which IH-35 has divided downtown from East Austin and how this barrier has taken on symbolic as well as physical importance. The symbolic and social lack of linkage, we believe, is a more serious problem than the physical one.

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN



As R/UDAT Team members, we cannot in one weekend, find a resolution to all of the past problems and inequities we have learned about, but as objective outside observers, we can offer a few suggestions.

The East 11th Street business district has all of the location ingredients to become a vital

neighborhood shopping district serving the State Capitol, University, and East Austin neighborhood. The linkage over IH-35 is already in place. To become a better, more viable district, new business and infrastructure investment capital must be invested in the district.

The linkage between the Capitol and East Austin in this area should utilize the east-west orientation of East 12th Street as envisioned in the original Edwin Waller grid. The median and landscaping along East 12th Street should be improved, upgraded, and pedestrian amenities provided.

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

In order to create a significant draw to the East 11th Street District, a new commercial development is needed on the vacant sites north and south of East 11th Street and directly east of IH-35. This project should orient primarily to the East 12th Street link to the Capitol. The proposal described to the R/UDAT task force as the "Bennett Proposal" has many of these ingredients. We are concerned that the retail uses as described could create serious obstacles to the regeneration of major downtown retail activity and feel that major regional retail tenants should not be included in the development plans. Instead, the retail elements should include those kinds of businesses that serve office workers, students, and neighborhood needs.

The proposed NCCD classification for this business district is a needed first step to commercial revitalization of this district. Without the provision of special land use controls that recognize the unique problems of the area, no serious redevelopment can occur. With a set of land use regulations scaled to the lot sizes and neighborhood character with appropriate mechanisms for financing, new development, a new commercial project to act as a magnet near IH-35, and with City investment in public infrastructure, the East 11th Street district could become a unique and vital commercial area similar to, but larger than the Pecan Square area in West Austin.

A second strong linkage potential exists between East Austin and downtown at East Fourth Street and IH-35. During the weekend, the R/UDAT team was exposed to several ideas for the reuse of the Capitol Metro transit site at the old rail yard just east of IH-35. This site has strong commercial potential due to its easy access to downtown and proximity to the Convention Center. Any of a variety of development concepts are possible. Some elements of any concept are obvious and appropriate however:

- The project should have some type of entry portal and/or signage on the west side of IH-35.
- Access to the site should be provided through East Fourth Street and East Fifth Street and from the Waller Creek Pathway.
- There should be a "festival market" theme to some portion of the project, which can expand and contract depending on the day and level of activity in downtown.
- There should be office space and neighborhood businesses which minority business people could own and operate.
- There must be technical support to these business people to allow these people to be successful.

- An Hispanic theme should be part of the development as an expression of the cultural traditions of the neighborhood.
- A rail corridor should be preserved for future transit and/or excursion steam train use.

The project requires the cooperation of Capital Metro and the City and must have a strong element of neighborhood support to succeed. The R/UDAT team believes some initial phase of the project could be initiated by the time the Convention Center opens in 1992, and that this project has strong potential as a business opportunity and viable link between East Austin and downtown.

WEST AUSTIN

The principal concern the R/UDAT team was made aware of regarding West Austin was the issue of neighborhood preservation. Linkages to downtown are generally good. There has been some concern in the past with downtown development proposals that might threaten the scale of existing residential neighborhoods. During this period of limited real estate development activity, land use regulations should be refined to ensure an appropriate transition of land uses that protects neighborhood scale.

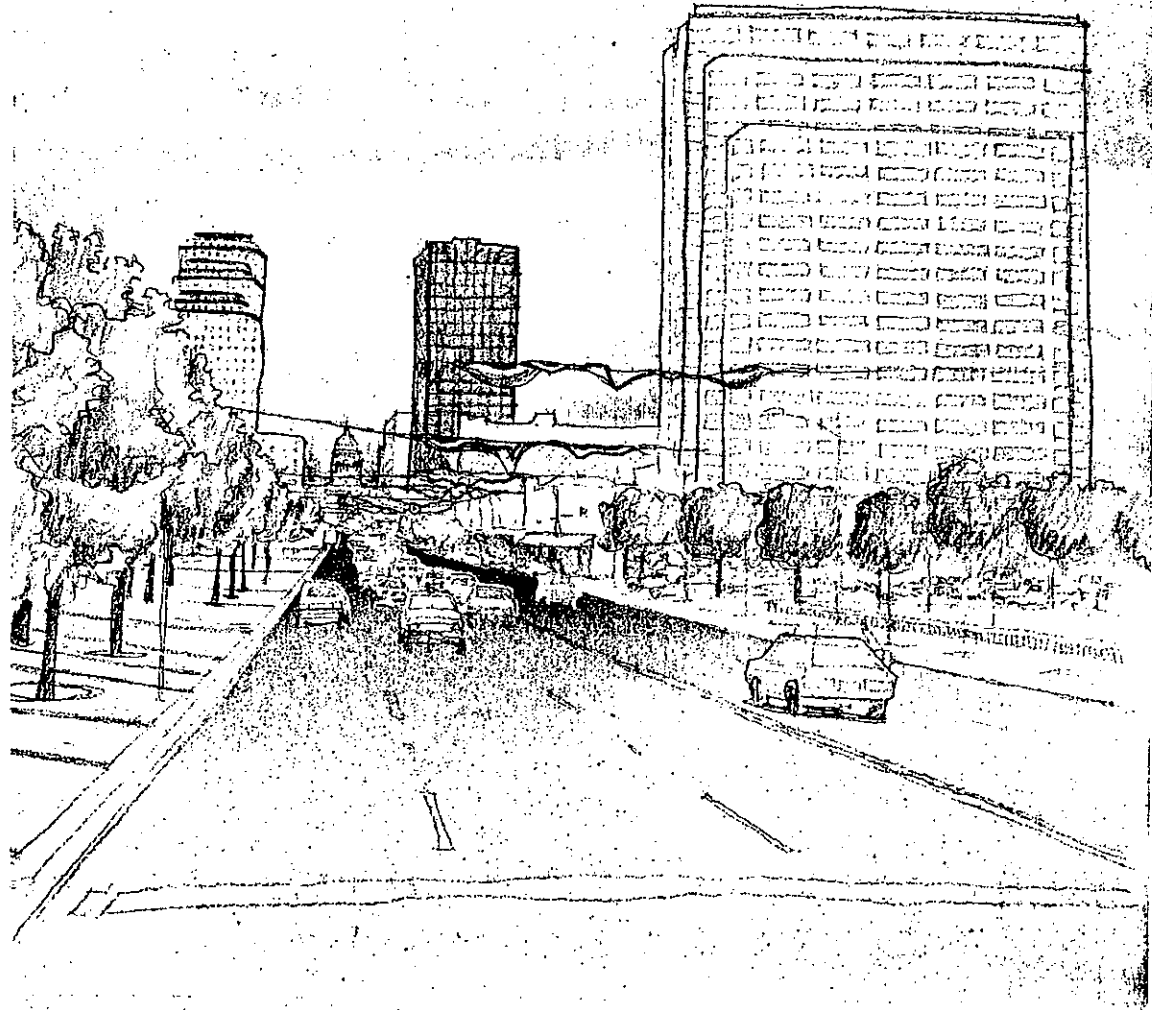
DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

IMPLEMENTATION OF AUSTIN'S DOWNTOWN VISION

Commit to a vision for the Downtown - The downtown vision must organize and guide the various efforts that will occur over time to transform the downtown. The vision is akin to a trip destination. It is important that it is identified early in the journey. It is important that it have broadbased support and be "agreed upon." It is important that there is a group with responsibility to "keep the vision" so that direction is not lost along the way.

Use milestones so the vision can be pursued in manageable steps - It will take years of sustained community effort to achieve the vision for downtown. Therefore, sustaining a realistic pace of progress toward the vision is vital. Always keeping the vision in sight, set priorities to accomplish feasible steps. Use the Convention Center opening date as a short term time frame. Consider this upcoming fifteen month period the time for preparing for the milestone of the Center's grand opening.

Be aware that broadbased support is essential in achieving the vision - The vision will point the way to Austin developing a great Downtown. Change and action require a commitment of public and private resources that may only occur with strong community support. The community must include all its elements, downtown



DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

businesses, residents, and institutions as well as the neighborhoods, especially those surrounding downtown. The neighborhoods must be in the act, and must respond with support for an agreed upon vision.

Organize to implement the vision - There must be community leadership and advocacy on behalf of the downtown vision. Political infighting among downtown elements will stop the vision in its tracks. In the sections above, it is recommended that the Implementation Committee of the Austin R/UDAT Steering Committee be guardian of the downtown vision, assure that specific implementation steps are taken by groups such as the City's Convention and Visitors Bureau, a new downtown organization, and the Austin City Council. The Mayor and Council can lead the public effort by making timely decisions when they are needed. The Austin R/UDAT Steering Committee should sunset at the latest in two years.

Put a lid on problems that are compounding - Some existing problems cannot be solved overnight. Time will be required. Visualize two phases: First, stop problems from compounding; and secondly, work away at improvement over time. This approach should be used with the homeless problem, economic integration of the East Austin neighborhoods, loss of historic properties, and other problems.

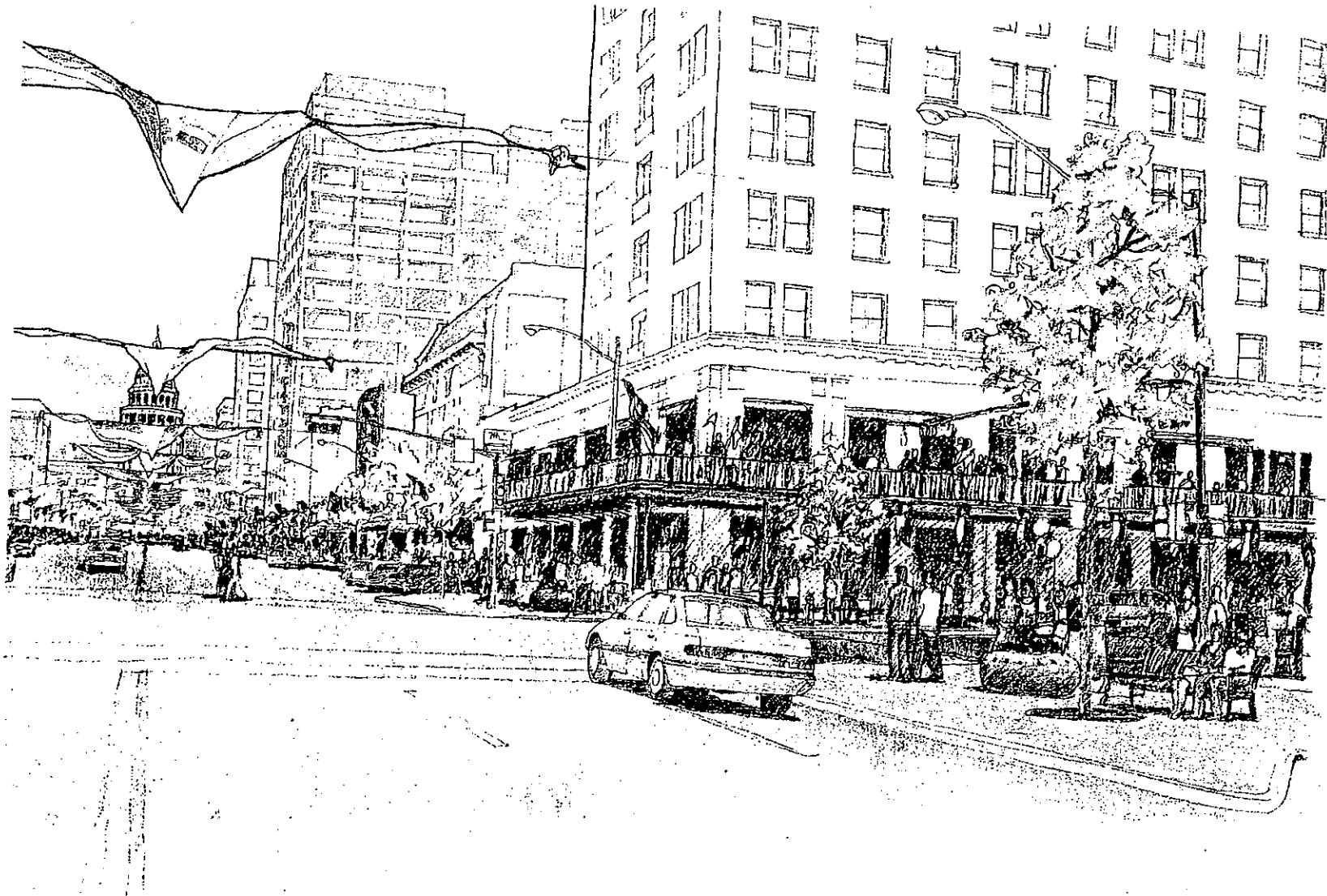
Capitalize on opportunities for progress as they arise - Various paths will lead to the vision. Take the steps first that are most feasible, and where the actions and current resources can be leveraged. The recent commitment to the Convention Center offers opportunities to boost East Sixth Street improvements, to emphasize intra-downtown transportation, and to accelerate Waller Creek connections to Town Lake.

Priority actions - Within the next 15 months:

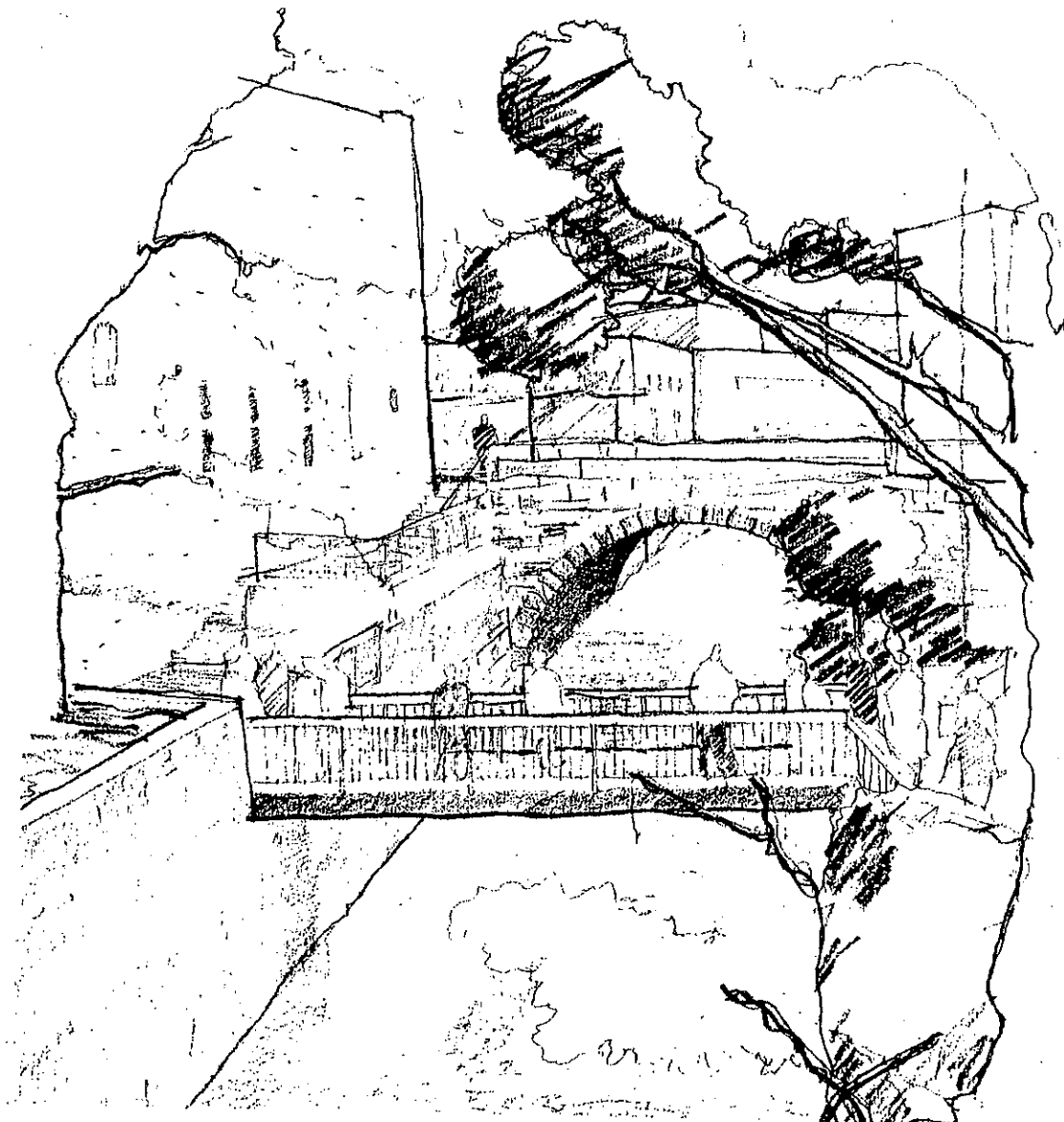
1. Begin steps to make Congress Avenue the best boulevard in Texas. Adjust zoning regulations to allow design to fit the downtown vision.
2. Complete linkages to the Convention Center. Utilize the natural values of Waller Creek.
3. Get a transit shuttle working within downtown connecting The University of Texas, the State Capitol and the downtown with the Convention Center.
4. Oppose the double decking of IH-35.
5. Organize a downtown association that will insist on stewardship of the downtown, advocate on its behalf, market it, assure physical and management improvements, and coordinate the efforts of all parties having a stake in a vital downtown.
6. Develop a meaningful program on the homeless combining private



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7. Make the improvements that are needed on East Sixth Street for traffic, pedestrian circulation and security.
8. Begin to knit together East Austin and downtown via various links along East 11th, East Sixth Street, East Fifth Street, East First Street and using the Bennett property. Provide the funding and organization to make it happen.
9. Get a project that is neighborhood scaled on East 11th Street in East Austin and fund it.
10. Develop specific measures with a firm timetable and private and public commitments to ensure the participation of the minority communities in the local economy.
11. Commit to a 20 to 24 hour per day walking police beat downtown centering on East Sixth Street.
12. Create incentives to maintain and improve use of existing buildings.
13. Develop design guidelines for the various overlay zoning districts in Downtown.

Commit the community's financial resources to ensuring that the Convention Center potential is realized - Capital funds will be needed to ensure that linkages are implemented tying the Convention Center

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to other downtown locations where visitors can recreate, make purchases and enjoy downtown's cultural offerings. Public and private sources should be identified as soon as possible. For example, consider a mix of funding sources such as Capital Metro for intra-downtown transportation, City electric fund for utility undergrounding, City bond funds for street and sidewalk improvements (already in 1991 Capital budget), private and University funds for enhanced security, City drainage funds for Waller Creek litter, City solid waste funds for street litter, and future bond funds for parks improvements. Although private Downtown sources may assist, City budget dollars should be committed to achieve the economic benefits from the visitors who will come to Austin's conventions. Create a tax increment finance district now to freeze the tax base. Consider a CIP District for future capital needs.

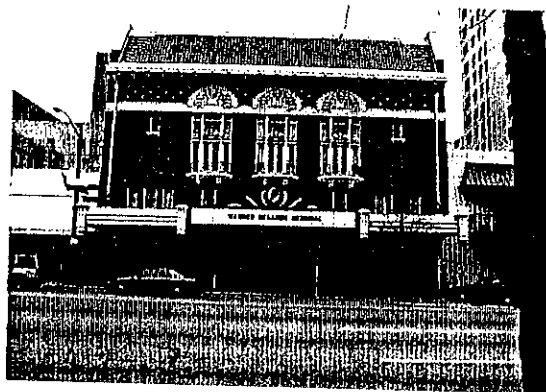
Adopt equitable funding programs for services needed to keep downtown vital -

The downtown will need certain special services to underpin the economic mission that is part of the vision. To the extent the community as a whole will benefit from the downtown's improved economic performance through sales taxes, jobs, entrepreneurial opportunities and property taxes, City budget dollars drawn from the community-wide tax base should be committed. Note that downtown contributes about 12 percent of all city property taxes and could contribute much more if it is healthy economically. It is vital these

expenditures be funded at an acceptable standard before opening of the Convention Center.

Next Priorities -

1. Declare that the downtown's priority is people not cars and undo the one-way couplets.
2. Reserve the electric powerhouse for a world class museum.
3. Develop a bond issue program for the following cultural facilities whose



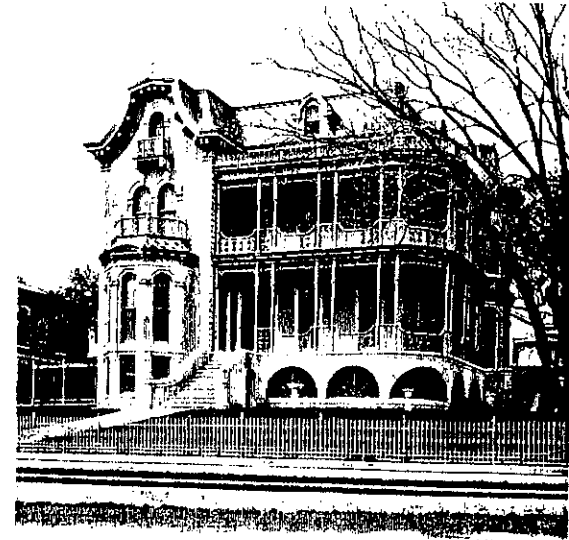
locations will be determined later:
 Mexican American Museum;
 Carver Cultural Center;
 Discovery Hall/Science
 Museum; and
 Children's Museum

4. Insure that the State Theatre and the Paramount Theatre remain and are economically sustained.
5. Provide a matching grant up to \$25,000 to get the Norwood Estate mansions moved and started.
6. Extend the East Sixth St. program

7. Give more than lip service to making the streets accessible to the disabled.
8. Preserve the neighborhoods to the west and northwest of downtown, including the Rainey Street neighborhood.
9. Provide economic support for individuals in the East Austin area to improve their residences.
10. Improve Shoal Creek and the Duncan Park area drawing on the experience of Waller Creek and incorporate trash containment systems.
11. Complete the Comprehensive Plan and Design Guidelines for the entire Downtown including coordination with the State and the University of Texas.

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APPENDIX



DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

CREDITS TO R/UDAT TASK GROUP

The Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) program is an initiative of the American Institute of Architects. The Austin R/UDAT began in September of 1989 and yielded this report in January 1991. The Austin Steering Committee was guided by the national R/UDAT Task Group, made up of seven architects and planners who volunteer their services to direct the program. Austin's thanks go out to:

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The Austin R/UDAT has depended on the work of many community volunteers and contributors of money, time, energy and ideas.

On behalf of the Austin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Austin, "thank you" for having been a part of the R/UDAT process. Acknowledging that some have been overlooked, the Steering Committee is grateful for the indispensable efforts of all who have helped to make the Austin R/UDAT a success.

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R/UDAT PROGRAM

The Urban Planning and Design Committee of the American Institute of Architects has been sending Regional/Urban Design Assistance Teams (R/UDAT) to various American cities since 1967.

The Austin, Texas Team is the 112th such team to be invited into a specific area to deal with environmental and urban problems which range in scale from a region to a small town and in type from recreational areas to public policy issues.

The design teams respond to the problems described by the local AIA chapters and other sponsors from the community.

Each Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team is specially selected to include professionals experienced in the particular problems of the area under study. Members

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are not compensated for their service and agree not to accept commissions for work resulting from their recommendations.

The team acquaints itself with the community and its people, presents its analysis from a fresh perspective, offers its recommendations and may propose a new approach for planning or for action.

SPONSORSHIP

The Austin R/UDAT is sponsored by the Austin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the City of Austin and the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce.

We are pleased to have been supported through cash and in-kind services totalling approximately \$50,000 for the cost of the study.

THE AUSTIN R/UDAT

In May 1989, the Downtown Commission presented the R/UDAT concept to the City Council as the next step after the adoption of Austinplan, the City's draft comprehensive plan. Previously, the R/UDAT concept had been presented to the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce's Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee which endorsed it wholeheartedly.

With both the City Council's and the Chamber of Commerce's support, an ad hoc committee consisting of representatives of the Downtown Commission, staff of the City's Planning & Development Department and the Chamber of Commerce presented the proposal to the Austin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The AIA's endorsement increased the potential for a successful R/UDAT application.

The ad hoc committee, including local AIA representatives, solicited the advice of Jim Christopher, FAIA, of the national AIA R/UDAT Task Group. Mr. Christopher agreed to visit Austin for a pre-R/UDAT publicity and support kick-off meeting.

That kick-off meeting held on November 6, 1989, was attended by almost 200 Austinites interested in Downtown Austin's future. On the agenda were Mayor Lee Cooke and then Mayor Pro-tempore Sally Shipman, as well as Pike Powers, then Chairman of the Board of the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce.

Almost 100 attendees signed up as official supporters of the proposed R/UDAT process and indicated the type of assistance they could lend. From those attendees, the R/UDAT Local Steering Committee was created with John Nyfeler, AIA, and Nan McRaven of Motorola serving as Co-Chairs.

At their first meeting in December 1989, the

Local Steering Committee was presented with a draft of the application prepared by the staff of the City's Department of Planning & Development. At their second meeting in January 1990, the application was approved for submittal to the AIA.

The AIA sent Ron Straka, FAIA, to Austin in May of 1990 as evaluator of the Austin R/UDAT application. In a three-day intensive review with over 150 Austin citizens, Mr. Straka completed the AIA evaluation.

In June of 1990, based on the recommendations of Ron Straka and with the concurrence of the R/UDAT Task Group, the American Institute of Architects committed to an Austin R/UDAT.

The reconnaissance visit by Mr. Straka and Charles M. Davis, FAIA, Chairman of the Austin R/UDAT Team occurred in late December 1990. By this time, the R/UDAT Local Steering Committee had grown to 900 interested citizens and volunteers.

The full team conducted the R/UDAT charrette between January 17 and 21, 1991.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the R/UDAT program are:

- To improve physical design

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- throughout the nation;
- To demonstrate the importance of urban and regional planning;
- To stimulate local public action;
- To give national support to local AIA chapters in their efforts;
- to improve their communities; and
- become actively involved in urban design and planning issues.

While an assistance team cannot provide detailed analysis or plans nor final solutions to complex problems in a four day visit, it can objectively approach long-standing problems with:

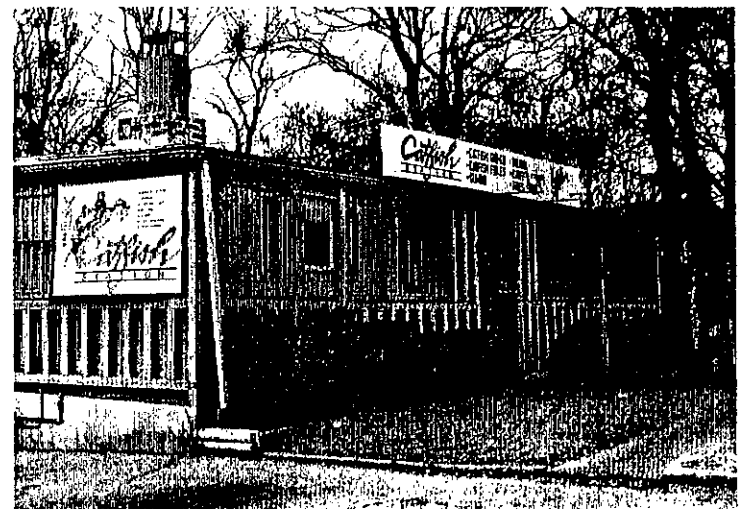
- A new look by experienced outsiders;
- A new impetus and, perhaps, new directions for community action; and
- Clear and comprehensive recommendations which are professionally responsible;
- politically and economically feasible; and
- publicly understandable.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

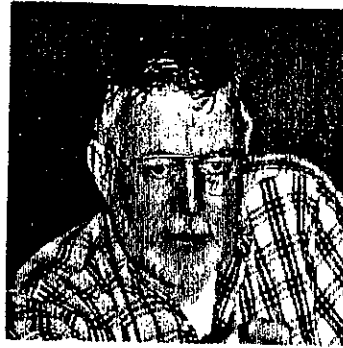


CHARLES M. DAVIS, FAIA

Charles Davis is a design and planning principal with Esherick Homsey Dodge and Davis with extensive experience on major institutional projects.

Mr. Davis taught architecture at the University of California, Berkeley and Los Angeles. He has also participated in or led AIA sponsored Regional/Urban Design Assistance Teams (R/UDAT) in Seattle, Washington; Lynn, Massachusetts; Boise, Idaho; Carlsbad, New Mexico; and Sarasota, Florida.

Mr. Davis is a registered architect in California and other states, and is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley.



ROBERT BURKE, AICP

Robert Burke is a partner with McConnell/Burke. He has participated in two downtown assistance teams, has worked on a visioning process with a downtown concept plan and has also worked on downtown plans as part of a comprehensive planning effort.

Mr. Burke was in charge of Advance Planning for Richmond, Virginia, and Deputy Director of the City of St. Louis Plan Commission. Prior to beginning his firm, he was a Principal and Director of Planning and Management and Planning Service/The NBBJ Group in Seattle, Washington.

Mr. Burke's planning experience and professional involvement are expanded by periodic teaching in urban planning at the University of Washington.



THOMAS A. GOUGEON

Thomas Gougeon is currently the Director of the Mayor's Office of Economic Development for the City and County of Denver. He is responsible for directing the City's economic development agency, including marketing, business recruitment and retention, and small business development and lending programs.

He was recently responsible for coordinating all city activities with respect to the planning and development of a new international airport for Denver. Prior to that, he was responsible for development of Denver's Downtown Plan. He has also worked at the Denver Research Institute and U. S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. Gougeon received a Masters Degree in City and Regional Planning and Public Policy at Harvard University and also attended the University of Denver.

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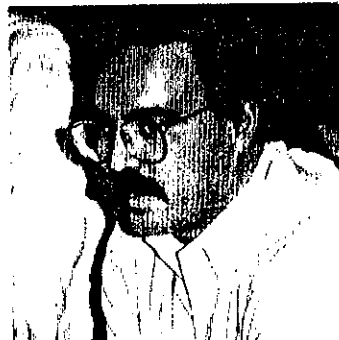
JAMES MURRAY, Ph.D.

Jim Murray is the President of Murray Lamont & Associates, Inc. in Denver, Colorado. His firm provides services to corporate and governmental clients relating to large scale environmental and urban development investment issues.

Dr. Murray's specialties include public finance and economics, strategic management of public/private issues, policy-level planning and economic analysis, and small business management.

Previous work experience includes positions as Finance Director for the City and County of Denver, Colorado, and the General Electric Company.

He earned his Ph.D. in Economics at the University of Oregon and has also earned degrees at Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration and the University of New Mexico.



DANIEL OCASIO, AIA

Daniel Ocasio is a registered architect and the president of Urban Access, Inc. a development, planning and design firm. He has provided architectural services for community health centers and housing rehabilitation projects as well as urban design and planning for 700 parcels of land for the City of Boston Public Facilities Department.

Mr. Ocasio has extensive public transportation experience in both design and construction of a major rapid transit effort of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. This project included development of a five track right-of-way, numerous rapid transit stations and over 50 acres of parkland.

He earned his Masters of Architecture as Columbia University as well as academic achievements at Pratt Institute, Cornell University and M.I.T.



RICHARD RAMSEY

Richard Ramsey is an associate in the firm of TRA in Seattle, Washington. He has managed the design of over twenty major park and recreation design projects, including eight hydroelectric reservoirs. Last year, Mr. Ramsey served on the R/UDAT team in Fargo, North Dakota. He currently manages the landscape architectural design group at TRA.

Mr. Ramsey's academic training and 20 years of professional experience cover a broad range of site planning and design areas including planning, landscape architecture, forestry, site engineering, architecture and urban design. His professional practice in landscape architecture covers project types ranging from large scale landscape analysis and land planning to detailed design and production of construction documents.

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ELIZABETH "HOLLY" STABLER

Holly Stabler is an independent consultant specializing in retail management and organization development in downtowns and other commercial centers. She served as Vice President and Director of Research and Policy Development for the International Downtown Association. She is a co-author of the recently published IDA-Urban Land Institute case study book on centralized retail management.

Ms. Stabler worked as a staff member of the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives, and consulting assignments with the World Bank and others.

Ms. Stabler earned a B.A. from Barnard College and graduate degrees in political science from Columbia University. She is active in Washington D.C.'s Capitol Hill community where her home and consulting business are located.



PAUL DAVID SEHNERT

Paul Sehnert has a background in planning, urban design and economic revitalization, combined with work in private architectural practice. Working out of Halcyon's Hartford, Connecticut office, Mr. Sehnert manages public sector planning, economic revitalization, urban design and development feasibility studies.

He has been involved in the creation of business district redevelopment plans, neighborhood urban design plans, and zoning and development guidelines. He created award winning revitalization and urban design plans for neighborhood business districts and inner-city neighborhoods. He has been a member of two previous R/UDAT teams.

Mr. Sehnert received a Master of Science in Real Estate Development from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and also attended the University of California.