

GUADALUPE STREET: TRANSIT CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT



An Implementation Handbook for The Drag
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July 2003

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An Implementation Handbook for the Drag

prepared for
UNIVERSITY AREA PARTNERS
CAPITAL METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Guadalupe Street, **one of the oldest and most historic commercial streets** in Austin, was laid out shortly after the original downtown grid to connect downtown to the University. Since Guadalupe Street was extended, that portion of the street has become known as “the Drag,” and has been a center of cultural activity and social change in Austin.

The Drag is often **one of the first introductions to the city** for a visitor or new resident, often as a student at the University of Texas, and it has been central to the college experiences of everyone who has ever attended UT. The Drag was the setting for much of Billy Lee Bramer’s novel, *The Gay Place*, and Willie Morris’ memoirs, *North Toward Home*. The civil rights movement in Austin began on the Drag. The painter Robert Rauschenberg lived in the old YMCA on the Drag. Janis Joplin bought records on the Drag. Richard Linklater’s movie *Slackers*, which invented the term and defined a generation, was filmed on the Drag. Each generation of students has its legends associated with the Drag.

The Drag is also **one of the most pedestrian-dominant streets** in the state of Texas. The Drag provides one of the few shopping districts that is easily reached by transit. Because the Drag originally developed around a trolley line, its line of storefronts and broad sidewalks are friendly to pedestrians and transit users. Currently the Drag is served by Austin’s most heavily traveled bus line, and will be an important destination along the proposed light rail system. A vibrant, healthy shopping district will encourage Austinites to use transit to shop or visit the university.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

For several years, business owners and residents of the Drag have been concerned about the health of their street. What had, in the past, been one of Austin’s most important shopping destinations, was **losing its customer base** to shopping venues that were developing in other parts of the city. Through the bust of the late 1980s-early 1990s, several stores and businesses left the Drag, including a number of clothing stores, a bookstore, and a popular movie theater. The famed Renaissance Market has been reduced to just a few vendors. At the same time, as locally-owned businesses have left, they have been replaced by chain stores, including Tower Records, Urban Outfitters, and Barnes & Noble Booksellers. These new neighbors have been welcomed for the most part, because they provide a draw to the entire street, but they can also cause problems when the small independent businesses can’t compete.

The **condition of the street’s infrastructure** is of even greater concern to area residents and business owners. Decades-old sidewalks are cracked and broken, street lighting is poor, and vegetation is worn or absent. Traffic volumes and speeds have increased over the years, making the street uncomfortable and less safe for



The Drag, then and now.

pedestrians, and overall a less inviting place to stroll and shop. Guadalupe Street has one of the highest rates of pedestrian accidents in Austin, a city that has an unusually high rate of pedestrian accidents.



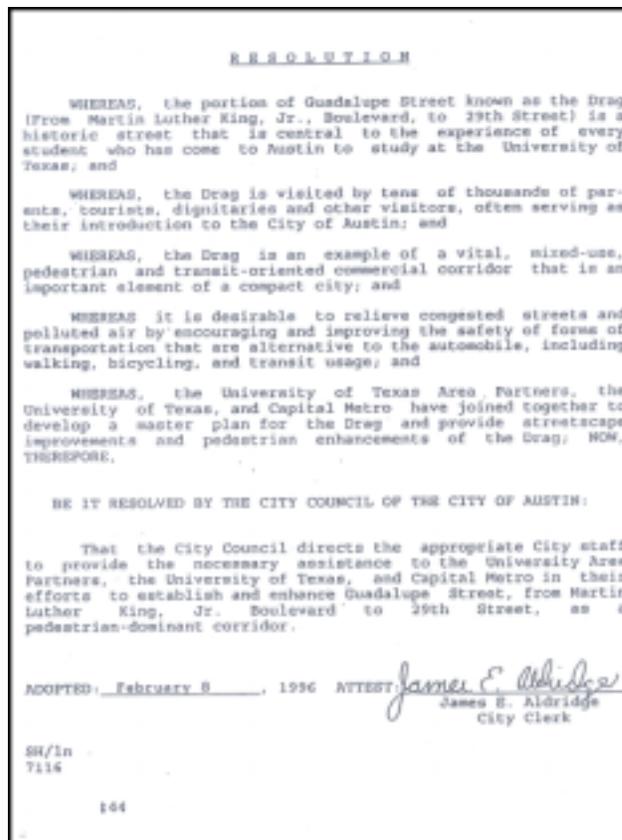
Problems with homelessness, especially among teenagers, have increased nationwide, and the impact has been felt on the Drag. While the Drag has a history of homeless residents, affectionately known as “drag worms,” and an important tradition of welcoming social misfits and a rebellious youth culture, in recent years the situation has grown less tolerable. The numbers of vagrants inhabiting the street has grown dramatically, and vandalism and crime have increased.



Business owners on the Drag have become alarmed as they realize that all of these factors are keeping their customers away. For years they sought ways to accomplish pedestrian improvements on the street, but it wasn't until 1995 that the **University Area Partners**, a long-standing neighborhood association comprised of business and property owners, churches, residents, students, and university administrators, managed to coalesce their efforts to improve the street. This effort coincides with the goals of the new University Campus Master Plan, and the University Area Partners were able to bring together three agencies with similar interests in the Drag: **the University of Texas, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and the City of Austin.** With funding provided by Capital Metro's Build Greater Austin program, and technical support provided by the City of Austin, an ambitious project to rebuild and revitalize a 10-block long stretch of Guadalupe Street was developed.



An aging infrastructure, homelessness, and frequent vandalism are conditions currently plaguing the Drag.



City of Austin Council Resolution.

GOALS

The primary goal of the Guadalupe Street Transportation Corridor Improvement Project is to **create a more vibrant and vital district** by improving the business climate for the enterprises on the street. A healthier corridor will have numerous public benefits, including:

- a viable destination to encourage the use of transit and other non-automotive modes of transportation;
- the availability of commercial services that are accessible to Austin residents who cannot or choose not to drive;
- an improvement to the image of the university's "front door," and the perception of the campus area as a safe and inviting environment in which to attend university;
- an increase in the number and quality of commercial services available to university students and staff;
- a safer and more inviting edge to the campus that will encourage students to arrive by transit or to live within walking distance, thereby helping to alleviate parking pressures on campus;
- an increase in tax base for the City;
- and more broadly, an investment in a central city area that fits with the concepts of "compact city" and "smart growth" and provides an alternative to sprawl.



Transit mall, Denver



Newbury Street, Boston

Successful retail streets with heavy pedestrian traffic.

The most important means of revitalizing the street is to **make the Drag as pedestrian friendly as possible**. Pedestrians are key to the business climate and perception of the street. It is imperative to generate as much foot traffic as possible. Nationwide, the most successful commercial districts are those with the most pedestrians. There is a direct correlation between amount of foot traffic and dollar amount of sales and rent per square foot. The most famous examples of highly successful retail streets include Fifth Avenue, Michigan Avenue, and Newbury Street—all with very heavy pedestrian traffic.

PEDESTRIANS FIRST

Locally, steps have already been taken to focus attention on pedestrian activity and increase reliance on alternative modes of transportation. The *Downtown Austin Design Guidelines*, a resolution adopted by the City Council in 2000, establish values for urban development based on a specific user hierarchy placing pedestrians first, followed by transit users, bicycle users, and, lastly, automobile users. The significance of pedestrian and transit activity already on the Drag not only strengthens its relationship to Downtown Austin, but also justifies the application of the same user hierarchy called for by the *Design Guidelines*. The proximity of the Drag to downtown links pedestrian opportunities in each district, and bus or transit connections between the two. The Drag, along with Downtown Austin, should be seen as the "center" of town: a place accessible to all Austinites for their enjoyment.



Street life, Paris, France



A place where one is able to stroll up and down.

Most people come to the Drag by bus or walk from campus or the surrounding areas, but everyone accesses the businesses on the Drag on foot. Even if they drive to the

Drag and park on the street, they must walk from their car to their intended destination. A large part of what draws people to the Drag is that it is a place where one is able to stroll up and down, window-shopping and people watching. Pedestrians headed to a specific establishment may impulsively stop at a shop they happen to pass on the way to their intended destination. Perhaps most importantly, pedestrians provide what Jane Jacobs termed “eyes on the street”—an inhabited street is safer and more inviting. Knowing the Drag already provides for a certain amount of these pedestrian activities, and has an even greater potential for becoming a truly significant public space and place, makes the vision of the Drag as a *Great Street* much more convincing and enticing.

THE PROJECT

The Guadalupe Streetscape Project, which encompasses Guadalupe Street from Martin Luther King Boulevard to 29th Street, can be thought of as having two parts. The first part is the actual **physical improvements** to the street right-of-way. These improvements are to be built in three phases: Phase I extends from 21st Street to 24th Street; Phase II extends from MLK to 21st Street and 24th to 26th Street (Dean Keeton Street); and Phase III extends from 26th (Dean Keeton Street) to 29th Street. The improvements include traffic-calming techniques that reduce the speed of cars by emphasizing crosswalks, enhancing transit stops, incorporating new shade trees, and introducing new lighting and other streetscape furnishings. Together these physical improvements balance the four modes of travel.



The second and perhaps more important part is the actions required of the private interests on the Drag outlined in this document, **the Implementation Plan** (Section 4.0). These actions include the organization of businesses to improve maintenance and safety, program activities, improve the sidewalk vendor program and recruit businesses for an appropriate mix of uses. This plan also presents improvements to private properties including storefront facades, awnings, lighting, and sidewalk cafe seating. All of these elements are discussed in detail in this document.



It is intended that the Implementation Plan be a **living document**; that is, that it is constantly disseminated and referred to, that it is used to guide decisions that are made by public agencies, private concerns, and individuals in the interest of the Drag well into the future, and that the precepts outlined here are revised by consensus when warranted. It is the inhabitants of the Drag: University Area Partners, UT Austin, the Renaissance Market Commission, as well as churchgoers, business and property owners, residents, and students who are the caretakers of this important street, and who will have to take the lead in the revitalization efforts. This document is intended to be used as tool, a handbook really, to help improve and preserve one of Austin’s treasures.



All transit riders are first and foremost pedestrians.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is this project good for transit?

All patrons of the bus system are first and foremost pedestrians. Transit authorities all over the country have come to realize that their responsibility for their riders' trips does not begin and end at the bus stop. Austin City Council recognized the importance of transit ridership and its relationship to pedestrian travel in its adopted transportation mode hierarchy, ranking transit users directly after pedestrians (with bicycle users and automobile drivers third and fourth.) The provision of a safe pedestrian environment must be a priority.

Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the City of Austin, and this stretch of Guadalupe Street in particular, have an atrocious pedestrian safety record. (25% of all accidents in Austin involve a pedestrian—this is one of the higher ratios in the country. Guadalupe Street ranked third in the number of pedestrian accidents in the city in 1996.) This project seeks to improve pedestrian safety by slowing vehicular speeds, highlighting crosswalk areas, reducing the distance pedestrians must cross, and adjusting signal light times to favor the pedestrian and reduce the temptation to jaywalk.

Slower vehicular speed is the most important goal of the project. The portion of the Drag between 21st Street and 26th Street (Dean Keeton Street) should be considered, after all, a “school zone.” Currently, except at peak hours, cars travel through the corridor upwards of 40 miles per hour. A pedestrian struck by a car at this speed will be severely injured or killed. The project seeks to reduce speeds to 20-25 miles per hour.

More globally, however, the Guadalupe Street project seeks to create a vibrant, economically vital, pedestrian “destination.” In order for a transit system to attract riders, there must be districts of dense activity within the city. This means there must be commercial districts with desirable businesses, housing, retail, and entertainment, served by a safe and pleasant pedestrian infrastructure that can compete with suburban, car-oriented commercial development. Unlike other cities with successful public transit systems, Austin has few such destinations. This is an attempt to invest in the first of many transit/pedestrian-oriented commercial and mixed-use corridors throughout the city that will support a viable public transit system.

How does light rail fit into the project?

The Guadalupe Street project is building the pedestrian infrastructure that will be necessary should light rail be built in the corridor. If light rail is not built the pedestrian infrastructure will be extremely beneficial even if Guadalupe Street remains a bus-transit corridor. The improvements anticipate the eventual installation of a light rail line in the outside lanes. The use of concrete pavers at street intersections will make the installation of the rails faster and easier—the pavers can be simply lifted up, and the base, rails and ties put in place.



Mixed-use corridor accessible to light rail.



The importance of dedicated bicycle lanes.



The impact on vehicular traffic.

How will the improvements affect bicycle traffic?

Phase I will provide the first lengths of bike lanes that will run north and south on Guadalupe from 21st Street to 24th Street. Bike lanes should be continued north of 24th Street along the Drag, although this is beyond the extent of Phase I of the Street Improvements Project. Currently, cyclists who prefer to ride on Guadalupe north of 24th Street have to take a car lane. Bicycle facilities along the Drag are in accordance with the City of Austin Bicycle Plan, and connect North Guadalupe and the Hyde Park neighborhood to Downtown Austin along a route already frequently used by cyclists.

As with the current bike lane, cyclists will have to stop when a bus stops to load or off load passengers. There is no way to avoid this conflict when buses and cyclists share a street. In the long term the bike lanes will be moved to another street if light rail is built. Light rail and bicycles are incompatible.

Street improvements should make appropriate accommodations for all City of Austin Bicycles Routes that cross Guadalupe Street. Phase I has two major bicycle crossing routes at 21st and 24th Streets. 21st Street has been given a *high usability rating* by the City of Austin.



Fourth Street



Second Street

Images from the Downtown Great Street Master Plan - a safer, more pleasant, more attractive environment for pedestrians.

How will the changes to the street affect vehicular traffic?

It is anticipated that traffic will move through the corridor at slower speeds, but more smoothly. The slower vehicular speeds will improve traffic safety by giving drivers better reaction time. While dedicated turn lanes will be removed, turning movements will still be permitted, with left turns facilitated by the signal light sequencing. A traffic study that modeled traffic flow with the improvements in place indicates that the added delay to motorists traveling through the corridor will be minimal, and no diversion of traffic onto other streets is expected. Only one intersection, at 21st Street, is expected to decrease in level of service for automobiles—from LOS (level of service) C to LOS D, still an acceptable level of service.

In light of the fact that far more people use Guadalupe Street on foot than in a car, the added minor inconvenience to motorists in order to improve pedestrian conditions is acceptable.

How will this project affect on-street parking?

The project will add approximately 5-10 spaces. The locations of the parking spaces will shift around on the street. There will be fewer spaces in front of the University Co-op and Barnes & Noble stores, but an increase in the number of spaces between 22nd and 21st Streets, and between 24th and 26th Street (Dean Keeton Street).

How will this project be good for the businesses on the street?

Slower traffic, better sidewalks and crosswalks, improved lighting, and new street

trees and furniture will make the street a safer, more pleasant, more attractive environment for shoppers, and will increase foot traffic. People will be more likely to linger on the street and visit other businesses; people will be more willing to park farther away and walk to their destination, passing other businesses along the way; and as foot traffic increases, the Drag will grow as a shopping destination.

In addition to the physical improvements to the public right-of-way, this implementation plan proposes the establishment of a management district for the street (see Section 4.1). A management district will organize efforts to improve maintenance and security, recruit desired businesses to the street for an appropriate mix of types of enterprises, encourage appropriate facade improvements and infill development, and work with businesses to improve their displays and business practices. In addition, the document will make recommendations for improvements for the Renaissance Market and the vendors on the street, and for programming activities, such as street musicians, to help draw patrons to the area.

How will the project affect the homeless population on the street?

Homelessness is a social problem that cannot be solved by this or any other physical improvements project. At most, the project will probably encourage the homeless to move elsewhere, first because of the disruption caused by the construction, and then by the increased activity and foot traffic on the improved street.

The best thing the project can do is increase the number of legitimate users on the street, so that undesirables do not “own” the street in the way they do now. The project will increase security on the street, especially at night, by increasing the activity and “eyes” on the street, encouraging businesses to keep evening hours, scheduling street musicians in the evenings, and improving the lighting on the street. As the street becomes more populated with other users, undesirables will become more of a minority and have a less visible impact.

How will this project affect the University?

The University has everything to gain and little to lose from this project. The possible delay for vehicles moving through the corridor may mean that the university will have to add shuttle buses to maintain the existing headway. On the other hand, the majority of pedestrians who are struck by vehicles are students or university employees, so the university community will be the biggest beneficiary of improved safety conditions. Increased activity and security in the evenings will be especially important to students who must pass through the Drag area at night.

More importantly, a dirty, decrepit street that sports only struggling businesses and hordes of panhandlers serves poorly as a front door to the campus and reflects negatively on the University’s image. As competition among universities increases, the University cannot afford to lose potential students or faculty members who were offended by the environment surrounding the campus. A vibrant commercial corridor, with vital businesses and activity, can add immeasurably to the quality of life of the University



Increase the number of legitimate users of the street.



Reflecting negatively...



...versus a vibrant commercial corridor.

community, by providing more and better services and a greater range of activities in the area. A more attractive Drag will make West Campus, as well as neighborhoods that are served by transit in the corridor, a more attractive place to live, and will help reduce the number of students who feel they must commute to campus by car.



The Capital Metro Dillo

Why should Capital Metro spend our tax dollars on this project?

The Drag is currently one of the highest generators of sales tax revenue in the area, producing far more in sales tax revenue for Capital Metro than will be spent on this project. As we fail to invest in commercial areas within the city, other businesses leave and retail developments move to the city edges, often outside of the service capability of CMTA and beyond the city limits, taking their tax base with them. This project is an investment that will not only preserve the existing tax base on the Drag, but will help to increase it.

What about other parts of the city?

This project is envisioned to be only the first step in building a system of pedestrian-oriented commercial nodes throughout the city that will support a public transit system. As non-automotive modes of transportation become more critical components of Austin’s transportation system, traditional commercial corridors will be crucial to encourage the use of these modes.



South Congress Avenue



East Sixth Street

A system of commercial nodes.

Already a number of neighborhoods have created similar studies for the re-development of existing commercial corridors, such as the *South Congress Improvement Project Enhancement Guidelines*, and the *West End Austin Corridor Study*. The *Downtown Great Streets Master Plan* has also been developed to address street improvements and pedestrian convenience throughout Downtown, and the relationship of the Great Streets initiative to this Implementation Plan presents a unique opportunity for the simultaneous enhancement of each district. Additional steps should be taken to address initiating similar improvement projects in other commercial corridors, including North Guadalupe Street (Hyde Park), East Seventh Street, East Cesar Chavez Street, East Sixth Street, North and South Lamar Boulevard, and MLK Boulevard. Any road improvements to these corridors should be designed to put pedestrians first. The communities that reside on these streets and others are encouraged to use the recommendations in the handbook as a road map for their own street improvement and revitalization projects. Communities and public agencies are encouraged to help save these Austin treasures—our neighborhood streets.

2.1

THE STREET

The section of Guadalupe Street known as the Drag probably **serves a greater variety of users** than any other street in Austin. Among the users of the Drag are:

- Many, many pedestrians, including students going from West campus to school, and from campus to businesses on the west side of the street; shoppers; church goers; and transit users.
- Renaissance Market and sidewalk vendors setting up their wares.
- Buses, including city local, express, Dillo trolley busses, and student shuttles and campus circulators.
- Cyclists, including commuters passing through and students going from one part of campus to another.
- Motorists trying to access the university and local businesses, including parking; motorists using Guadalupe as a through street from one part of town to another; and trucks trying to make deliveries to businesses, the student union, and university museums.

Another mode of travel that is expected to be added in the near future is light rail, with a major stop on the Drag. The introduction of light rail to the Drag will create a much greater number of pedestrians, and ultimately add to the amount of bicycle and automobile users as well. The close relationship between the Drag and Downtown presents an ever-increasing opportunity for a marked influx of pedestrians, transit users, cyclists, and automobile drivers, as downtown undergoes its own Great Streets transformation.

Not insignificantly, a number of utilities use the street right-of-way, including water and waste water, storm water drainage, electricity, phone and cable lines, and gas lines. All of these users and uses each have their own, often-conflicting needs. The real test of the process has been to achieve a balance between these needs so that the Drag operates most efficiently and to its highest potential.



Pedestrians...



...transit...



...cyclists...



and automobiles all use the Drag.



The Renaissance Market

DESIGN STANDARDS FOR THE STREET

2.1.1 Design the street for pedestrians first.



Conducive to pedestrian activity.



Commercial streets can carry large volumes of traffic.

Issue:

Pedestrian traffic is crucial to the success of the corridor. All commercial establishments on the Drag, with the exception of a few restaurants that have drive-through windows, derive their business from customers that enter the store on foot. Many establishments on the Drag depend on impulse shoppers—customers that are not destination oriented, but are just walking by and decide to stop. These businesses do best in areas with high volumes of pedestrian traffic—it is very difficult to make an impulse stop in a car.

Recommendation:

The most important objective when designing any aspect of the Drag is to make it conducive to pedestrian activity—to make it as safe and comfortable to walk as possible.

2.1.2 Use traffic-calming measures, and allow for congestion.

Issue:

Commercial streets can carry large volumes of traffic and still be pedestrian-friendly, but cars should move at slow speeds and traffic calming devices should be employed. Slower cars mix more safely with pedestrian traffic, it is easier and safer for motorists to enter and exit the street in order to park and access businesses, and businesses get more attention from drivers that are moving slowly. The very best of commercial streets, such as Market Street in San Francisco, Michigan Avenue in Chicago, and Newbury Street in Boston, are well-balanced and highly congested.

Recommendation:

Use traffic-calming measures to design a street that motorists instinctively drive 20 mph or less.

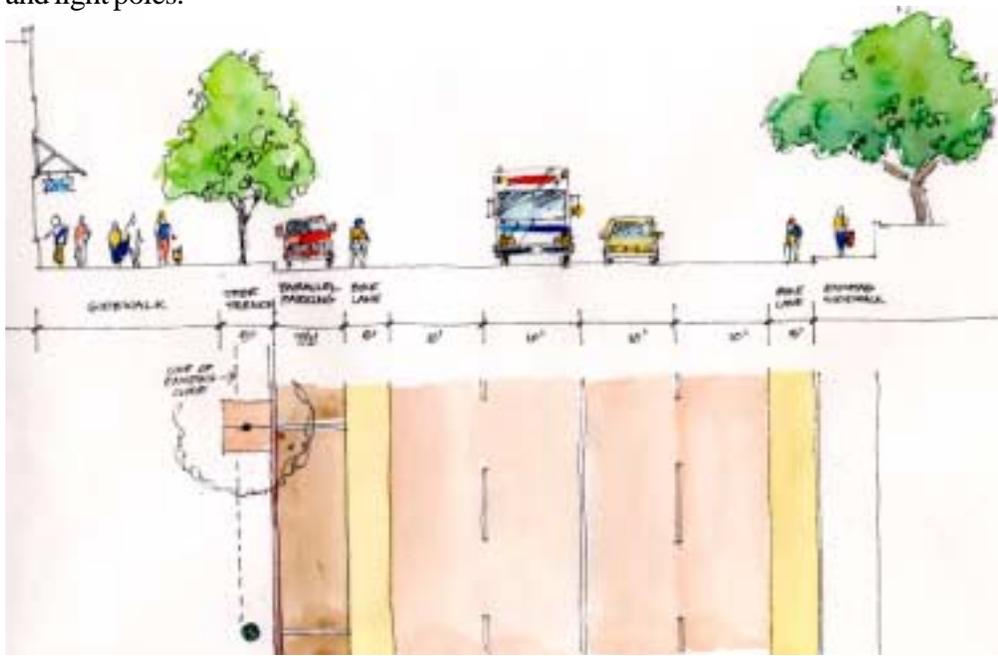
2.1.3 Narrow the street as much as possible, both visually and in actual dimensions.

Issue:

Motorists tend to drive more slowly and attentively on a narrow street and narrowing the street is one of the most effective means for slowing vehicular speeds. Narrowing the street also means that pedestrians have less distance to cross the street, increasing their safety and ability to easily cross.

Recommendation:

Make the vehicular lanes as narrow as possible. A width of ten feet meets the criteria of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Visually narrow the street by emphasizing the delineation between areas for motorized traffic and bike lanes and sidewalks, and by defining the edge of the street with closely-spaced vertical elements: street trees and light poles.



The design of the renovated street is described in the above drawing of a section cut through the street. There are four ten foot-wide vehicular lanes, two in each direction, a bike lane in each direction, and a lane of parking on the west side of the street. The widths for all lanes meet guidelines put forth by the Institute of Transportation Engineering.

The paving material for the vehicular lanes is to be asphalt. Asphalt was selected as the most cost-effective paving material that can stand up to the heavy bus traffic. The textured surface of concrete pavers at street intersections has an added traffic-calming effect and serves to signal to motorists that they are entering a special area and should heed pedestrians. The bicycle lanes are paved in colored concrete to contrast the vehicular lanes. The contrast in color and texture will visually narrow and define the edge of the vehicle lanes and help delineate between bike areas and motorized traffic areas.

2.1.4 Give pedestrians frequent points to cross.

Issue:

If legitimate crossing points are not frequent enough, pedestrians will jay walk, jeopardizing both their own safety and that of motorists. Also, if pedestrians must walk very far out of their way to visit a business across the street, very often they will not make the trip at all. This can have significant impact on businesses on the Drag, most of which are located on the west side of the street, while their primary customer



Jaywalking jeopardizes the safety of the pedestrian.

Recommendation:

Make pedestrian crossings as frequent as possible. An additional signalized crossing is necessary between 27th and 29th Streets. Consider creating a “Sundays only” signalized crossing at 20th Street to ease the ability of churchgoers to cross from the Dobie parking areas to St. Austin’s church. This could be accomplished with a police officer directing traffic or with a temporary device that can be removed during the week. Another Sundays-only crossing could be created at 25th Street to accommodate churchgoers who park west of Guadalupe and attend church on the east side of the street.



Where signalized crossings are not possible and the street right-of-way dimension permits, create medians in the center of the street that serve as “isles of refuge,” so that pedestrians need only cross two lanes of traffic at a time.

2.1.5 Accommodate bicycles.

Issue:

Bicycles are an important piece of the transportation mosaic—they have the potential to become the most popular means of individual transportation, replacing the personal car for some users. They are affordable; they provide the personal freedom and flexibility that transit lacks, yet one’s range of travel distances is much greater than on foot. Because of this, bicycles can have the greatest impact on relieving parking and traffic congestion. Due to the popularity of bikes among students, and the use of Guadalupe Street as a north-south arterial for commuter cyclists, the Drag already sees a fair amount of bicycle traffic.



Accommodate bicycles on the Drag.



Specialized bicycle paving.

Recommendation:

Accommodate bicycles on the Drag. Alert drivers to be aware of cyclists and make it clear that cyclists have a right to use the street through signage and pavement markings. Encourage less experienced riders (B level riders) through the provision of bike lanes or well-marked bike routes through the university area.

Use traffic calming devices to slow vehicular speeds on the Drag so that bicycles may maneuver more safely in traffic. Where bicycle lanes are provided, they should be visually and texturally differentiated from the vehicular lanes so that the vehicular lane remains perceptually narrow (refer to Section 2.1.3). The paving selected for the bicycle lanes on the Drag should also correspond to the paving selected in the *Downtown Great Streets Master Plan* for the Downtown area. Finally, enforce the laws that govern bicycles.

If light rail is adopted and the Drag is chosen as the north/south route, the bike lanes will move to San Antonio Street so that each 11’-0” outside travel lane and the 5’-0” bike lanes can be incorporated into the light rail corridor. The bike lane on the west

side will serve to protect people accessing parked cars. The east side bike lane can be converted to a wider sidewalk and transit stop.

2.1.6 Accommodate on-street parking.

Issue:

On-street parking is one of the most important elements contributing to the vitality of a commercial street. The parking supports adjacent businesses, contributing to the vitality of the street, and reducing the need for surface parking lots. The parked cars also provide an almost subconscious visual clue that indicates the presence of businesses and the street's desirability as a place to be. Most importantly, on-street parking serves as a traffic-calming device (see Section 2.1.2), and parked cars provide a comfortable buffer between pedestrians on the sidewalk and moving traffic.

Recommendation:

Accommodate on-street parking wherever possible. The street edge should be dominated by parallel parking.

2.1.7 Avoid dedicated turn lanes.

Issue:

Additional traffic lanes that are reserved for vehicles that are turning right or left significantly widen the street, usually at the expense of precious sidewalk width. They also create a greater distance at intersections for pedestrians to cross. Right-turn-only lanes are especially hazardous to pedestrians because they allow motorists to turn into the path of pedestrians who are crossing with the light without stopping.

Recommendation:

Avoid the need for dedicated turn lanes through the design of the signal light cycle. Where right-turn lanes are absolutely necessary, separate them with raised medians that are wide enough to serve as pedestrian refuges. Right-turn lanes should be designed with significant deflection to force motorists to reduce their speed and yield to pedestrians. An example would be the right turn from Guadalupe Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

2.1.8 Give intersection corners tight turning radii.

Issue:

A tight turning radius at the street corner will require turning vehicles to slow and yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk. This will also reduce the amount a pavement a pedestrian must cross.

Recommendation:

Make the radius of the street corner as small as possible. Heavy-duty curbs can be used to allow emergency vehicles to make wide turns over the sidewalk when necessary.

2.1.9 “Bulb out” the sidewalks at intersection corners.

Issue:

Extending the sidewalk out past the parallel parking lane narrows the street at intersections, helping to calm traffic (see Section 2.1.3) and reducing crossing distance. This also provides more room for pedestrians where more space is required to gather as they wait to cross the street.

Recommendation:

At intersections, extend the sidewalk past the parking lanes, up to the through lane or bike lane, as the case may be.

2.1.10 Accommodate light rail

Issue:

The University currently creates the heaviest ridership on the city bus system, and promises to provide the most riders for a new light rail system. For this reason, a major light rail stop is planned for the Drag at the campus. A northbound light rail line on Guadalupe with a stop on the Drag, planned by Capital Metro, would be a boon to both the campus and the businesses on the Drag by greatly increasing their accessibility.



Recommendation:

The design of the Drag must accommodate light rail for the future. The northbound lane has always been planned for the eastern most traffic lane with a 300 ft. long stop between the Inner Campus Drive and the “crossing” at the West Mall.

Early discussions of the southbound lane of light rail had it placed on San Antonio Street. Later discussions consider Guadalupe Street for the southbound track as well as the northbound. This choice would reduce construction as well as operations costs and would be more convenient for users. The stop would be north of 23rd Street toward 24th Street since this is the only place where 300 feet for a stop is available. Bicycle lanes would then move to San Antonio Street. The most recent discussions have moved light rail off of Guadalupe Street completely.

2.2

THE SIDEWALK

The sidewalks on the west side of the street are the heart and soul of the Drag. Here is where the university community lives: shoppers stroll and tourists gawk, homeless youths panhandle, students and professors run into each other in passing, vendors hawk their wares, members of garage bands post fliers, and so on. It is this richness of activity that makes the Drag such an enjoyable and special place to be. The purpose of this project is to allow the Drag to better accommodate these activities and more.



Austin History Center

PICA 10650

2.2.1 Make sidewalks generous.

Issue:

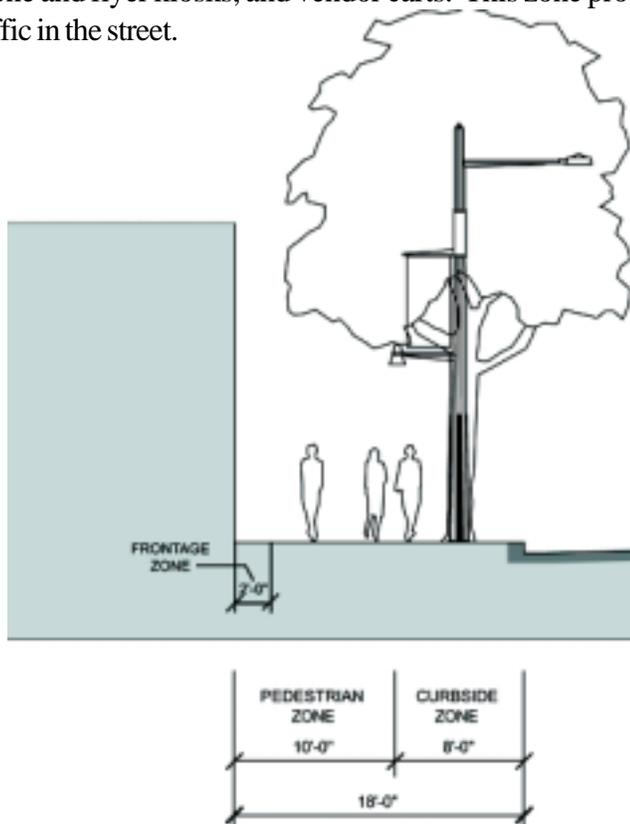
A width of at least 15' to as much as 30' is necessary to accommodate cafe seating, vendor carts, street furniture, transit shelters, and other uses that contribute to an active and vibrant street life.



The richness of activity on the sidewalk on the Drag.

Recommendation:

The sidewalks from 21st Street to 24th Street are wide and can be described as having three zones: the “window-shopping” frontage zone where people can linger at store fronts and entryways, and cafe seating and store displays can be put out on the sidewalk. The pedestrian zone is the area in the center of the sidewalk through which most traffic moves. The curbside zone is occupied by street trees, light fixtures, signage, parking meters, telephone and flyer kiosks, and vendor carts. This zone provides a buffer to the moving traffic in the street.



2.2.2 Use simple, durable sidewalk materials.

Issue:

It is important that the streetscape on the Drag not look “designed;” rather, it should retain an authenticity using timeless, practical materials. Materials should be chosen on the basis of durability and life-cycle costs.

Recommendation:

The sidewalk material should be appropriately scaled and colored pedestrian pavers. These pavers will replace existing worn concrete, allowing the addition of pavers in the future as the Drag continues its revitalization process. Historical inserts in sidewalks should be saved wherever possible and glass block inserts at the Co-op should be restored. A new twelve-inch wide curb should be used throughout. Markings on curb should be with metal plaque inserts and paint applied only to sandblasted areas.



2.2.3 Provide street trees.

Issue:

Trees provide shade, texture, scale, and a sense of enclosure. Tight spacing at a regular interval gives spatial definition to the street and sidewalk, helping to visually narrow the street. Trees with straight, columnar trunks and high canopies contribute to this effect.

Recommendation:

The primary elements within the curbside zone are the new street trees. Typically, the trees will be cedar elms, spaced 22'-0" apart, and alternating with new light fixtures. Live oaks, which are larger and more dense than the cedar elms, will be placed at intersections to help reinforce the definition of the corners. Intersections at 22nd and 24th Streets are currently defined by the presence of live oaks.

A special feature of the curbside zone is the tree/utility trenches, continuous trenches beneath the street trees that allow the tree roots have as much room to spread as possible. This will create healthier, longer-lived trees. The trenches will be covered with paver-grates. Airspace between the soil and the grates will provide oxygen for the trees, as well as create a space for channels that can carry utility conduits.

The use of structural soil in the continuous trench and/or beneath the sidewalk will further enhance tree growth and maturity. Structural soil provides the structural support for a concrete or paver sidewalk, while allowing for sustainable root growth. Whether the soil is used in a continuous trench or beneath the entire sidewalk surface will be determined as a further study is undertaken of structural soil's properties.

2.2.4 Provide pedestrian-oriented street lighting.

Issue:

The current lighting on the Drag was designed for motorists, not pedestrians. The light is on the street, not the sidewalk. The fixtures are tall, and widely spaced, creating pools of shadow. Sodium lamps provide a harsh, orange-colored light. The effect is to create a street that is unpleasant, and seemingly unsafe at night.

Recommendation:

Light fixtures should be at a scale (approximately eighteen to twenty feet high) and spacing to provide spatial definition to the street. Lower, more frequently spaced light sources will also provide a more even lighting with fewer shadows, improving the perception of safety for pedestrians.

The new streetlights will be a simple, classic design. A new streetlighting prototype has been developed as a part of the *Downtown Great Streets Master Plan*, and it is recommended that the system created for downtown be adapted to the Drag. The lamps will be metal halide, which provides a much more natural color of light than the current sodium fixtures. The lamps will also be hooded, "full cut off," so as to reduce light pollution.



Bryant Park, New York - shade, texture, scale, and a sense of enclosure.



Streetlighting can accommodate banners and signage.

2.2.5 Use furnishings that are simple and timeless in design.

Issue:



Bench on Congress Avenue.



Simple benches.

It is important that the streetscape of the Drag not be over designed. Most of the elements that are added to the street should be “reticent” in design. A simpler design will be more timeless, so that the street will not seem dated several years from now. More importantly, the Drag already has a very colorful character that comes from the people, the shops, the murals and the signage, and it is a character that changes drastically with each generation of young people that comes through. It is important that the streetscape elements merely provide the simplest framework and backdrop for the colorful tapestry that is the Drag. An exception to this objective is those streetscape elements that are to be designed by artists. These elements are described in detail in Section 2.3.

Recommendation:

Furnishings to be placed in the curbside zone, including benches, bike racks, trash receptacles, and kiosks, should be simple and timeless in design, sturdy and able to withstand abuse. A reputable company, with replacements and replacement parts available well into the future, should manufacture the furnishings. The kiosks are custom-designed elements using sturdy industrial materials, and will contain public phones and provide bulletin board surfaces for the placement of flyers. Some of the kiosks will also house controls for the traffic signal lights and for the irrigation system for the trees.

2.2.6 Accommodate sidewalk vendors.

Issue:



Sidewalk vendors contribute greatly to the vibrancy of the street, and add “eyes on the street.” Successful vendor programs must be initially well-planned, and carefully and tightly managed.

Recommendation:



Eyes on the street.

Vendors should be located in the curbside zone. The bases of the street lamps will house lockable electrical receptacles for the use of vending carts. Recommendations for the improvement of the sidewalk vending program are discussed in detail in Section 4.2.

2.2.7 Provide outdoor chess tables.

Issue:

The outdoor chess tables form one of the most active and vibrant areas in Harvard Square, a commercial district at the edge of Harvard University that has faced problems similar to those of the Drag. At all hours, crowds gather around the half-dozen concrete

tables to watch people play. Bryant Park, in New York City, is another great example of outdoor chess facilities.

Recommendation:

Tables and chairs should be placed in a single location. Possible locations include the Renaissance Market, the sidewalk between The Renaissance Market and the University Co-Op, outside University Baptist Church, or outside St. Austin's Church. It is important that the location be shaded, either with trees or umbrellas.

As with the other street furniture, the location should be experimented with after the street improvements are complete, before a permanent location is selected. The UAP may want to involve the UT chess club in the installation of this facility, and encourage them to use it. Once installed, the tables should be cleaned regularly, and kept free of bird droppings and litter.

2.2.8 Provide safe and comfortable transit stops.

Issue:

Safe and comfortable transit stops will encourage transit use.

Recommendation:

Transit stops should include seating, schedule information, lighting, public phones, trash receptacle, and in some cases access to commercial conveniences such as newspapers or coffee. Where space permits, the stop should provide protection from the elements. Transit stops along the Drag should be further unified with those in adjacent areas and neighborhoods, such as Downtown and Hyde Park, as well as along major transit routes (north along the Drag, MLK Boulevard, North Lamar Boulevard, and so on.) The development of a standard transit stop system will aid in the familiarity and use of transit throughout Austin.

2.2.9 Install signage and furnishings so that they are secure, yet can be moved or removed easily and cleanly.

Issue:

Sign poles, parking meter poles, and other street furnishings are often moved or removed. The Drag is littered with stumps of previous poles or unpatched holes in the sidewalk, contributing to the visual chaos of the street. The Great Streets light pole with signage and banner guidelines can greatly reduce the sense of chaos.

Recommendation:

Signage (not on light pole) and parking meters are to be attached directly to the ground



Outdoor chess tables.



© Sherry Kafka Wagner
Simple, timeless, safe, comfortable.

whenever possible, with a standard connection that is detailed in the Phase I construction documents. This attachment allows the meter or sign pole to be removed cleanly when necessary, without leaving a stump or unpatched hole in the sidewalk.

2.2.10 Provide for the posting of flyers.

Issue:

Flyers are an important part of student life and free speech on the Drag, announcing music performances and other events.

The areas of sidewalks at street corners compose perhaps a fourth sidewalk zone. Because these areas become crowded with so many pedestrians traveling in different directions and waiting for signal lights to change, these areas should be kept relatively clear of street furniture. At the same time, because people congregate here, some elements are best located here, including trash receptacles, and posting areas for flyers. Because people are more likely to read a flyer while waiting for the light to change, these areas are prime spots for flyers. Without legitimate posting areas near intersections, it will be difficult to keep flyers from being posted on traffic signal poles.



Recommendation:

Provide bulletin board kiosks at convenient locations, with bulletin boards that are always accessible for posting flyers. The design of the kiosks should be simple and include durable finishes due to the frequency of use. The bulletin boards will be constructed with slats of soft wood to accommodate staples. These slats can be cheaply and easily replaced when they are worn. The kiosks can also be used to house traffic control boxes at intersections where necessary. The *Downtown Great Streets Master Plan* includes a prototype for a Downtown signage kiosk that would be equally appropriate to the Drag.

2.3

INCORPORATING ART INTO THE STREETScape

2.3.1 Use art to contribute to the rich visual character of the Drag.*Issue:*

The Drag has a venerable history of “street art,” from the ad hoc colored tile patches in the sidewalk to the numerous murals. While the streetscape of the Drag is intended to be “reticent,” relying primarily on plain, durable materials, certain elements should be designed by artists to make very strong visual statements.

Recommendation:

By incorporating the work of artists into the design of the streetscape improvements, this aspect of the street’s character will be preserved and enhanced. This is also a means of adding the design sensibilities of others to the design process, thereby creating an even richer product.

Artists selected should exhibit particular expertise and talent for a specific project. The artist would prepare designs of their pieces, working with the architects of the overall street improvement. Upon receiving approval for their designs from the University Area Partners, they would be hired as subcontractors to the general contractor for construction, working with the contractor to build and install their piece. At this time, the art program for the Drag remains unfunded.

2.3.2 Use art to tell the history of the Drag.*Issue:*

A very important reason for incorporating art on the Drag is that it is a means to make the history and legends of the street more apparent. A book could be written just on the Drag, and it would be a history of Austin and of student life in general. Yet, surprisingly few people are aware of all of the interesting places and events that have existed on the Drag in the recent past.

Recommendation:

As part of the art program, we propose that the history of the Drag, both physical and social, be researched and presented to the artists as potential material to be incorporated in their work. A team of artists working in a variety of materials will plumb this material to find the stories that should be told and the places and means in which they are told. Objects may be placed in the sidewalk at a certain location to describe something that happened there. More elaborate storyboards may be placed at bus stops where they can be contemplated by waiting passengers. Plaques, tiles, paving, and sculpture,



Contributing to a rich visual character.

offer endless possibilities. The only preconception of these pieces is that they incorporate wit, creativity, interaction, and an element of surprise and unexpectedness, in the best tradition of the Drag.

2.3.3 Integrate functional art into the streetscape.

Issue:

It is imperative to avoid “plop-art”—stand-alone art in a public space that is commissioned after the fact, created in isolation, then placed on a pre-designated spot.

Recommendation:

The art is intended to be very integral to the functional elements of the streetscape. This project is an opportunity to include artists as members of the design team. Besides the open-ended story-telling pieces described above, artists will be commissioned to design specific functional pieces, including:

- A sculpture should be located in an island at the intersection with MLK Boulevard, to mark the start of the Drag.
- A sculpture should mark the entrance to the Renaissance Market and increase the market’s visibility. This gateway will speak to the history and uniqueness of the market, and will frame the view of the UT tower from the market.
- Sculptures should mark the bus stops, serving as highly visible signposts. They could include light so they are visible at night, and support schedule information. Where there is space, they will incorporate shelters. The bus stop at 21st Street in front of St. Austin’s Church should incorporate the church forecourt.
- At significant intersections, such as 24th Street, or the pedestrian crossing from the UT West Mall, a large scale paving pattern may be incorporated into the street paving. This distinct paving pattern would further distinguish the character and significance of these intersections, and provide an additional measure of safety for pedestrians from vehicles crossing these “special” places.



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Functional streetscape art.

3.1

INFILL DEVELOPMENT AND FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

The character, massing, scale, and orientation of buildings along the Drag have great impact on the character of the street and the quality of the pedestrian experience. The public's interest in the development of private property is asserted through the enforcement of zoning and land use regulations. Section 3.2 contains suggested revisions to the City's zoning and land use regulations. This section outlines discretionary guidelines that are intended to help the developer or business owner design building improvements or develop new buildings that are compatible with the character of the Drag. The objective of these guidelines is to help ensure that the physical form of the buildings support the success of businesses and other uses as much as possible.

It is important that business owners and developers who are planning projects on the Drag, some of whom may be newcomers to the university area, be made aware of these guidelines as early in their planning and design process as possible. All city planning staff, city development reviewers, and members of the Planning Commission should be knowledgeable of these guidelines so that they may inform developers on how their projects may be impacted by the guidelines. The Planning Commission, in particular, can request that these guidelines be adhered to in exchange for approval of any code variances that are sought. Most importantly, the University Area Partners and other stakeholders on the Drag must become very proactively involved with developers in their area, by bringing these guidelines to the attention to anyone planning a project on the Drag, notifying the City caseworker reviewing any development plans of the neighborhood's desire that these guidelines be adhered to, and speaking at any hearings before the Planning Commission or City Council regarding the neighborhood's wishes.

The University Area Partners and/or the recommended management organization (see Section 4.1.1) should explore the city's "Smart Growth" concept and seek to employ the incentive program used downtown to encourage the infill development in the Guadalupe corridor. The criteria used downtown is entirely relevant since it seeks to induce a "compact city."

The following guidelines are intended to be not only in the best interest of the street and the neighborhood as a whole, but also in the best interest of the individual business or property owner. They are offered in the spirit of assistance in the design of any buildings or building improvements.

3.1.1 Define the street edge by placing buildings right on the property line.*Issue:*

While the physical characteristics of the sidewalk are important to the safety and comfort of the pedestrian, the character of the edge of the sidewalk is almost equally important in encouraging foot traffic and making the street a nice place to walk. On



Significant retail façades.

the Drag, as in Downtown, the continuous wall of storefronts make the street comfortable and interesting as a place to stroll. It is at the breaks in the storefronts, at 21st Street and at 26th Street (Dean Keeton Street), that shoppers and strollers turn around. Only destination-oriented pedestrians keep walking past any gaps. Businesses located beyond these gaps suffer. Setbacks in the building plane also provide spaces for vagrants to set up shelter.

Recommendation:

Policies should be established to encourage development that fills the gaps in the “street wall.” Buildings should abut the sidewalks, with no setbacks, and provide a continuous edge. Building facades should be simple planes at the street wall.

3.1.2 Minimize interruptions in the building plane.

Issue:

Interruptions in the building plane can cause a window shopper to turn around (see Section 3.1.1.)

Recommendation:

Interruptions in the building plane, especially for driveways and garage entrances, should be kept at a minimum. Where there are interruptions, they should be as narrow as possible, no wider than two feet. Openings such as courtyards, patios, and pocket parks may be acceptable, especially if they are occupied by an active use like cafe seating. It is important, however, that the breaks are kept small, and the implied definition of the building/sidewalk edge be maintained with planters, awnings, loggias, etc.



3.1.3 Avoid windowless building façades on the ground floor.

Issue:

The areas on the Drag that have the most problems with vandalism and transients are those that do not provide “eyes on the street,” including the Baptist Church and the Faculty Center. Pedestrians need to have a sense that a building is occupied. Windows that act as “eyes on the street” provide a feeling of safety.



The importance of windows at streetlevel.

Recommendation:

The face of the building should have an active use on the ground floor, with 60-80% transparency. The ground floor use that best contributes to the street is retail. The most successful facades are glazed almost to the ground, discouraging loiterers from sitting on the ground and leaning against the buildings, while enticing and encouraging window-shopping.

3.1.4 Place garages and parking lots behind buildings.*Issue:*

Parking is the most deadening of all uses that can front a sidewalk. Nothing will kill the life of a street faster than a “missing tooth” used as surface parking.

Recommendation:

All parking, especially parking garages, should be placed behind buildings or an active ground floor use at the street wall.

3.1.5 Do not provide direct access from businesses to their parking lots or garages.*Issue:*

If people are able to walk directly from their car into a business, it can deaden a street because it keeps people from venturing out onto the sidewalk. Not only does this discourage people from impulsively visiting other businesses, but also because it empties the street of people, it can make the street seem less safe and a less desirable place to visit.

Recommendation:

While parking lots and garages should be placed in the back of businesses, entrances to those businesses should be in front, on the sidewalk. A patron will walk from the parking area around to the front, and become part of the life of the street.

3.1.6 Do not allow driveways to cross sidewalks.*Issue:*

An interruption in the building plane and pedestrian path can deter shoppers (see Section 3.1.2.)

Recommendation:

Do not allow cars to interrupt the primary pedestrian path on the Drag. Vehicles should preferably enter a property from a side street or alley parallel to the Drag.

3.1.7 Pave any driveways the same as sidewalks.*Issue:*

Where driveways must cross the pedestrian path, the interruption must be minimized, with the pedestrians given the clear right-of-way.



The problem of onstreet driveways.

Recommendation:

If driveways absolutely must cross sidewalks, they should be paved the same as the sidewalk, to indicate that the vehicle is entering the pedestrian’s space. Driveways should be the minimum width possible, no more than twenty feet.

3.1.8 Shade windows with awnings.

Issue:

For businesses to benefit from pedestrian traffic, storefront windows must invite passersby, and the wares on display must be easily seen. Awning shades reduce reflections in storefront windows, permitting wares to be seen. More importantly, the extension of the awnings over the sidewalk helps the building to “claim” the public space. This discourages inappropriate behavior such as panhandling, and provides a sense of shelter for legitimate users of the sidewalk.



Recommendation:

Encourage deep, flat awnings over storefront windows. “False” awnings, awnings that barely project from the building face and serve primarily as signage, are useless for shade and should be avoided. Be certain to integrate awning height and depth with tree canopies and improved streetlighting.



3.1.9 Orient signage toward pedestrians.

Issue:

On a pedestrian-dominant street such as the Drag, signage that will have the most impact will be signs that are easily seen by and are attractive to pedestrians.

Recommendation:

Signs should project perpendicularly from building faces, and include interesting color, shapes, and textures. Colorful, three-dimensional signs contribute to the wonderful character of the Drag as long as they are properly scaled and well designed.



Shade windows with awnings.

Pedestrian oriented signage.



The Drag.

3.2

CITY ZONING CODES AND ORDINANCES

There are provisions within the City of Austin zoning codes and ordinances currently regulating development on the Drag that disallow or make difficult appropriate development, while allowing inappropriate development. Following are recommended changes to the current ordinances.

3.2.1 Allow residential uses over ground floor commercial.*Issue:*

Housing in the campus area is at a premium. At the same time, property on the Drag is underutilized, using only the first floor, for the most part. Creating more housing on the Drag will develop a larger customer base for businesses and ridership for transit, and will make the Drag safer as a 24-hour street.

Recommendation:

Remove any zoning obstacles for housing over retail on the Drag. There should be no city-imposed parking requirement.



Second floor residential.

3.2.2 Prohibit drive-through service windows.*Issue:*

Drive-through service windows have had a devastating effect on the pedestrian environment on the Drag, and they continue to be built. Drive-throughs are also bad for the environment—many cities through out the country are prohibiting them because of air quality concerns. There are plenty of examples of businesses on the Drag and in other parts of the city that thrive without drive-through windows, including branch banks, dry-cleaners, and fast food restaurants. A prohibition on drive-throughs may discourage chain restaurants from locating on the Drag, to the benefit of locally owned restaurants.

Recommendation:

Seek a Council resolution calling for City Staff to immediately create an overlay zoning that prohibits drive-through service windows on the Drag. Begin negotiations with business owners to remove all existing curb cuts on Guadalupe Street as soon as possible.



Avoid drive-thrus.

3.2.3 Create a more permissive sidewalk cafe ordinance.

Issue:



Sidewalk cafe seating can contribute a great deal to the vitality of the street, and everything should be done to encourage sidewalk cafes. The sidewalk cafe ordinance is still somewhat restrictive, with severe limits on the number of tables, and the requirement that tables be brought indoors at night limits the type and quality of the seating that can be used.

Recommendation:

Convene a forum with restaurant owners to determine how the existing ordinance might be altered. Consider limiting the number of tables as a percentage of the tables inside the restaurant. Consider allowing tables to remain outside overnight.

3.2.4 Allow “sandwich signs” and other displays outside of stores.

Issue:



Encouraging street life.



Appropriate onstreet signage.

Attractive displays and signage outside of stores adds to the color and vitality of the sidewalk and helps a business attract customers. Such displays are currently disallowed by ordinance.

Recommendation:

Change the ordinances to allow sidewalk displays within the “curbside zone” on the Drag. Guidelines should be developed to control the size and quality of the displays, with enforcement and design assistance provided by the local management organization.

3.2.5 Create a signage ordinance for the Drag.

Issue:



Avoid backlit plastic signage.

Currently there is no signage ordinance to control the size and quality of signage on the Drag. At the same time, ordinances prohibit signage that is perpendicular to the building face and oriented toward pedestrians.

Recommendation:

Create a signage ordinance for the Drag that limits the size of signs, disallows backlit plastic signs, and encourages smaller signs that are hung perpendicular to the building and oriented toward and scaled appropriately for pedestrians.

3.3

THE UNIVERSITY EDGE

The largest single property owner on the Drag is the University of Texas. The edge of the campus, which extends from 21st Street to 27th Street, has significant impact on the street and its physical character. The sidewalk and approximately half of the planter are within the street right-of-way.

The campus edge differs significantly from the rest of the street, which is dominated by commercial buildings. The difference in function is emphasized by a change in landscape and materials. Compared with the hard edge of colorful and varied storefronts, the campus edge is dominated by the thick canopies of large live oaks, and a creamy palette of shell stone and limestone. Compared to the noisy, bustling activity of the commercial street, the campus provides a cool, shady environment where most street noise is masked by the sound of the water fountain at the entrance the West Mall. Clearly the University edge is a special realm. This contrast is an appealing physical experience, which lends richness to the texture of the street.

If the West Mall is the “front door” of the campus, then the Drag could be considered its foyer. The view of the campus from the Drag, and the transitions from the street to the campus have a significant impact on one’s perception of the campus. The University, as part of its campus planning process, has expressed a desire to make improvements to this edge of campus to take better advantage of their environs. A more open edge between street and campus has the potential to create a synergy between the two.

3.3.1 Create a porous edge between campus and street.

Issue:

The original campus edge consisted of a broad grass lawn that sloped down to the sidewalk and street, presenting a very open face to the campus. In the late 1960s, stone planter walls were built, effectively walling off the campus from the street.

While the clear definition of the boundary between campus and public street is desirable, the physical boundaries that inhibit a pedestrian from passing between the two, and block views from the campus to the street and from the street onto campus are not. This condition causes problems in safety perception—a pedestrian on the upper sidewalk along the campus edge feels trapped and isolated between the backs of the buildings and the planter walls, out of sight from people down on the street, and unable to cross the street or change paths if necessary. Likewise, the west side of the street and the bus stops on the east side of the street do not benefit from the comfort of “eyes on the street” of people on campus.

The lower sidewalk directly adjacent to the street is too narrow, does not provide any barrier between pedestrians and moving traffic, and does not meet ADA criteria for sidewalk widths. In order to access the transit stops from campus, one can descend to the lower walk from a limited number of points; one must then travel on the narrow sidewalk to reach the bus stop.



The University edge.



Recommendation:

Create more points of access between the upper and lower sidewalks, so pedestrians can move freely between the two. Wherever it is possible without harming the trees, break through the planters with steps and ramps, and lower the walls that remain to seating height, so that one may see over them.

3.3.2 Put seating and activity areas where people can view the street.

Issue:

Currently the campus edge primarily presents the backs of buildings and loading docks to the street, not an appealing image for the university's public facade. Active uses would not only contribute to a livelier Drag and provide the safety of "eyes on the street," but areas on campus with views to the Drag provide opportunities for people to enjoy watching passers-by and activities on the street.



Recommendation:

Place activity areas along the edge of campus, with views and access to the Drag wherever possible. Lower the planter walls and provide steps to the street to open up the student union patio to the street. Place cafe seating and vendor kiosks under the *Battle Oaks* at the corner of 24th Street.

3.3.3 Build-in potential seating.

Issue:

Students like to hang out in public areas. Chance encounters with fellow students enhances the feeling of community on campus. People in public areas provide “eyes on the street” and contribute to the perception of the campus as a friendly, inviting environment.

Recommendation:

Build in potential seating wherever possible. The West Mall fountain, whose current sharp edge creates an unwelcoming image at the entrance to campus, should be replaced with a fountain that has stepped, multi-level seating around its entire perimeter. Lower planter walls to seating height and top with caps wide enough to sit on comfortably.

3.3.4 Let campus buildings address the Drag.

Issue:

Currently, most buildings along the campus edge present their backs and service entrances to the Drag. Many buildings that are used by the non-university public, including the student union theater, Hogg Auditorium, Cactus Cafe, and the Harry Ransom Center, have very little public presence and it is difficult to find their entrances.

Recommendation:

Accentuate the entrances to the Student Union Theater and Cactus Cafe and mark them with signage. A marquee could contribute greatly to the financial viability of the union film program. Provide clearly marked paths to Hogg Auditorium and the HRC.

3.3.5 Announce the front door.

Issue:

Visitors to campus need a clear point of entry. A strong entrance will enhance the axial, ordered nature of the campus. Currently, the planter walls angle in to “pinch off” the entrance, and there are no elements to mark it as a gateway.

Recommendation:

Widen the opening between the planter walls and angle them outwards. Emphasize the axis with symmetrical vertical elements at the West Mall. Continue the line of cedar elm trees down to the street, replacing the existing unhealthy specimens. Install new streetlights on each side of the entrance to mirror the streetlights on the west side of Guadalupe.

3.3.6 Put out a “welcome mat” at the entrance to campus.

Issue:

A significant number of students and visitors enter campus by crossing the Drag at the West Mall. Currently the crosswalk at the West Mall is poorly marked and barely visible to motorists. A lack of a clear crosswalk at the West Mall causes many motorists to miss the traffic signal and fail to yield to pedestrian right-of-way. Long traffic signal cycles, as well as a lack of a clear crossing, encourages jaywalking.



The Cactus Cafe at the Union



The Union loading dock



West Mall crossing

Recommendation:

The crosswalk at the West Mall should be seen as an extension of the mall. A distinct paving pattern in the crosswalk will help to emphasize the front door to the campus. Continual paving patterns from the West Mall across the street will help to visually connect the Drag and campus, emphasizing their synergetic relationship.

3.3.7 Match light fixtures on both sides of the street.*Issue:*

The edge of campus currently has two types of light fixtures that are both at an inappropriate scale. The tall “cobra head” fixtures are designed for highway use, and contribute to the perception of the Drag as a highway at night. The height of the lamps and their large spacing create numerous shadow spots that create a feeling of insecurity. The small “lollipop” fixtures, while of a more human scale, are under scaled to the street and adjacent buildings and emit a poor quality of light.

Correctly scaled and closely spaced light fixtures on both sides of the street, as vertical elements, can visually narrow the street, improving its proportions and bringing it down to a more comfortable scale. This can also have a traffic calming impact. Lower, more closely spaced lamps will provide a more evenly lit environment.

Recommendation:

Install matching light fixtures on both sides of the Drag, spacing them so they are opposite one another, so that banners can be strung across the street from light pole to light pole, and to create a coherent vertical space on the street. Use metal halide lamps to provide a more natural light. The light fixtures specified in the construction drawings for Phase I follow the principles set forth in the *Downtown Great Streets Master Plan*.

3.3.8 Provide user-friendly, easily accessed bus stops.*Issue:*

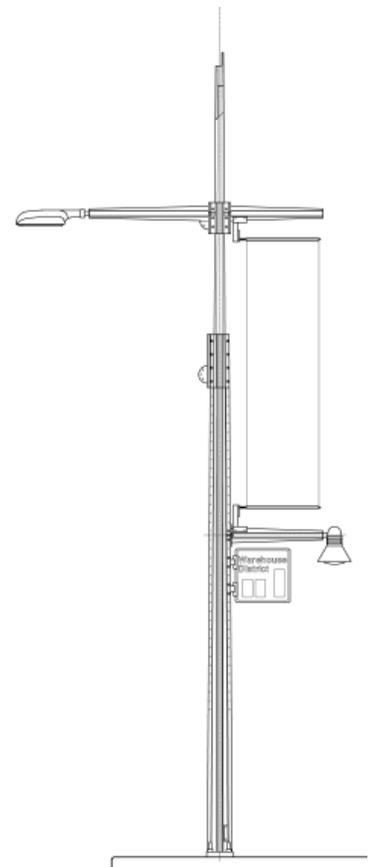
Given the parking problems on campus and the traffic problems through out the city, the university must do everything possible to encourage students, faculty, and staff to use transit. Currently, the bus stops on the east side of the street are crowded, with little seating and no shelter from the weather, and do not meet ADA criteria for wheel chair access.

Recommendation:

Create an alcove in the planters at the bus stops to the south of the West Mall crossing and at 24th Street, to provide roomier seating areas next to the sidewalk. Lower the planter walls to seating height and top with caps that are wide enough to sit on



Existing “cobra head” and “lollipop” lighting fixtures



Proposed Great Streets integrated lamp fixture and signage

comfortably. Build steps and ramps through the planters around the bus stops to provide more access points. Lower any remaining planter walls to increase the visibility and safety of the bus stop areas. All work in the area to improve current bus traffic should anticipate light rail.

3.3.9 Plan for a light rail station.

Issue:

The university currently creates the heaviest ridership on the city bus system, and promises to provide the most riders for a new light rail system. For this reason, a major light rail stop is planned for the Drag at the campus. While a light rail line and stop will be a boon to both the campus and the businesses on the Drag by greatly increasing their accessibility, the narrow right-of-way will make it a very tight fit. The only viable area for a light rail platform on the east side for the northbound rail stop is the area between Goldsmith Hall and the eastern curb of the street, from the pedestrian crossing south to 22nd Street, or the Inner Campus Drive exit.

The original plan for light rail contemplated the southbound line on San Antonio Street. More recent discussions consider the possibility of putting that southbound track on the west side of Guadalupe to save on construction costs and improve operations including a convenience to riders. The optimal location for the rail stop on the west side would be between 23rd and 24th Street. This is probably the only segment long enough to be considered. The parking could remain but the bike lane would move to San Antonio Street.

Recommendation:

Though technically much of this area is in the public-right-of-way; the campus is currently using it. The university must take the lead in planning for this platform and work closely with CMTA to insure a smooth transition to light rail in the future.



Existing campus bus stop



Light rail station



Light rail station

4.1

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Physical improvements to the Drag will not create a cure-all. The Drag faces a number of problems that will not be solved by the new construction: problems with security and safety, vandalism, panhandling, litter, maintenance, marketing, a mix of enterprises that is less than ideal, and inconsistent business hours. Most of the recommendations in this document are in addition to the planned physical improvements. A single entity should be created to prioritize and implement these recommendations, and to secure the necessary funding.

4.1.1 Establish a Management Organization.

Issue:

The problems facing the Drag can be addressed most effectively through the coordinated management of a Management Organization. A funded, staffed organization that is dedicated to dealing with these problems can go a long way toward accomplishing solutions. More importantly, a management organization can spearhead a coordinated effort to create an economically healthy, vibrant, balanced community that aligns with a large-scale vision of the potential of the Drag and the university area community.

A management organization is a proven approach for promoting revitalization that has been successful in cities throughout the country. In Austin, the Downtown Austin Alliance has made great strides in its eight years of existence, and deserves much of the credit for downtown's vitality.

Recommendation:

Certainly, no other neighborhood organization in Austin has achieved what the University Area Partners has been able to accomplish. The UAP has worked tirelessly for years toward solving safety and homeless issues. The UAP's dedication to the street improvements brought this project about and kept it alive. Stakeholders have worked hard to build consensus behind the project and to raise matching funds. The entire university neighborhood should take pride in the significant contributions of their neighborhood organization to the quality of life on the Drag.

The UAP has been a strong and extremely effective advocate for the university area community to local entities, working closely with the Austin Police Department, the City Council and staff, and Capital Metro. A management organization would expand this role to include the private sector, by taking a very proactive role in the development and maintenance of the Drag, and providing support to attract and retain desirable businesses.

The UAP should form the core basis of a new management organization—with funding and paid staff, the UAP will be able to achieve even more than it has with voluntary



Integrated signage and lamp fixture, Chicago

efforts. The UAP is a known entity with a proven track record, and has established a great deal of credibility that will help obtain funding. The UAP can either grow into this organization, or the organization can function as a branch of the UAP.

4.1.2 Apply to the Texas Main Street Program.

Issue:

The Texas Main Street Program, which is administered by the Texas Historical Commission, is one of the most successful such programs in the country. They have recently begun implementing the program in urban centers, such as their program in San Antonio.



Although the Main Street Program is not a direct source of funds, it is an excellent source of technical assistance. Designated Main Streets receive assistance with fund raising, staff training, organizational development, voluntary design assistance programs, and program evaluation. In addition, Main Street provides a nationwide network of people and organizations facing the same challenge.

Recommendation:

The Texas Historical Commission advises that successful urban Main Street Programs typically require a minimum of two staff people and a budget of \$100,000 per year. At least half of that amount should come from the City. The private sector is expected to make a significant investment as well.



Murals at the Renaissance Market

4.1.3 Pursue multiple sources of funds.

Issue:

Funding is crucial to many aspects of the Implementation Plan. The Drag will not only be more secure if this funding comes from many different sources, but also the support from a variety of groups and agencies will help to confer legitimacy on the community's efforts. In addition, as Capital Metro gears up to build a rapid transit system, they may not be able to provide the entire funding for future phases of the street improvements through the Build Greater Austin program.

Recommendation:

There are many ways to fund the Management Organization and Main Street program, including:

- Form a Public Improvement District, with a special assessment on large privately owned properties within the district. The DAA serves as a very effective model for a private non-profit organization for district self-improvements.
- Work with the City of Austin to have parking meter revenues collected in the university area returned to the neighborhood. The agreement that the

Downtown Austin Alliance worked out with the city can become the basis of a similar agreement between the UAP and the City.

Projects may be funded by three major public mechanisms:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Private funding from landowners and businesses
- General revenues of local, state, or federal governments, such as Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)

4.1.4 Work with other community groups.

Issue:

There are a number of neighborhoods and community groups through out Austin that are trying to accomplish some of the same things. Not only can the Drag learn from others experience, but also a coalition can be more powerful in effecting some of the changes that need to happen citywide.

Recommendation:

The UAP can benefit from the expertise and experiences of other community groups in Austin who are working toward some of the same goals, including:

- Downtown Austin Alliance
- North Guadalupe Neighborhood Association
- Hyde Park Neighborhood Association
- West End Austin Alliance
- South Congress Improvement Project
- Avenue Merchants Association
- Dawson Business Coalition

Additionally, the UAP may consider partnering with one or more of these groups on specific projects, as well as benefiting from shared goals.



Street planters



A vibrant shopping district, Michigan Avenue in Chicago

4.1.5 Hire a market analyst to prepare an in-depth analysis and a business retention/expansion plan.

Issue:

The specific mix of businesses on the Drag is crucial—it is the economic engine as well as the defining characteristic of the Drag. The businesses must serve different market segments, including:

- University students and staff, who need services like copying, places to eat lunch, book stores
- Neighborhood residents who need still more services like dry cleaners, groceries, drug store, hardware, and entertainment
- Shoppers from elsewhere in the city who come for the ambiance and stores and a selection of goods they cannot find elsewhere, such as the Drag’s many record shops
- Tourists to the university area, who will be interested in places to eat, lodging, souvenir and insignia stores, as well as the Drag’s history and ambiance.



Capital Metro.



Unique, simple bicycle racks.

An economically healthy corridor will serve all of these populations. In addition a difficult balance must be maintained between large chain stores and smaller locally owned businesses. The chain stores which currently exist (Barnes & Noble, Urban Outfitters) are important—they serve as attractors to bring in shoppers from elsewhere in the city, and they provide a range and selection of goods that smaller stores cannot. Local businesses, however, are what make the Drag the Drag, giving the street a specific, local character.

Recommendation:

An understanding of the enterprise mix of the Drag is necessary in order to know what types of businesses can serve as economic generators, what is lacking, and the types of businesses that should be actively recruited. The analyst should build on the work that has been done by Lee Walker’s students, as well as that by Fred Kent and Larry Lund. The analyst should prepare a business retention/expansion plan that identifies key businesses and options, means of recruiting target businesses, and a timetable for fulfillment. Specifically, the analyst should recommend means for retaining small locally owned businesses.

4.1.6 Encourage and educate businesses regarding business development programs.

Issue:

Most businesses are small, “mom-and-pop” operations, with little resources for business development or expertise. This makes it very difficult for them to compete individually with stores in the malls or chain stores.

Recommendation:

The Management Organization should sponsor assistance to businesses on operations, displays, merchandise, tenant mix, etc., in order to improve the quality of businesses and business climate on the Drag in such a way that locally-owned small businesses that make the Drag unique are able to thrive.

4.1.7 Encourage appropriate façade restoration.*Issue:*

Many of the storefronts on the Drag have been inappropriately designed, detracting from the street environment, as described in Section 3.1. Many of these façades were recently renovated at great expense, only to exacerbate the problems. A technical assistance program, based on the guidelines in Section 3.1, can help to prevent these mistakes in the future.

Recommendation:

If the Drag succeeds in being designated a Texas Main Street, the Main Street Program will be able to provide superior assistance in façade restorations, especially with historic facades. Even without Main Street assistance, however, the Management Organization should take a very proactive role in the renovation of storefronts, approaching new businesses that plan to renovate with the guidelines described in Section 3.0, and the property owners of the worst offenders among existing façades with options for funding restorations. The Management Organization should solicit the help of the University of Texas School of Architecture in targeting the restoration of some of the more historic façades on the Drag. A façade easement program should be explored as a tool to insure appropriate treatment of façades.



Inappropriate façade treatment.

4.1.8 Set up a low-interest loan pool for façade renovations.*Issue:*

Financial assistance will be necessary to allow many small business owners the ability to make much needed facade improvements. Detailed criteria should be developed to govern façade work. These programs are integrated into and encouraged by the Texas Main Street Program.

Recommendation:

The Management Organization should fund a revolving loan pool to assist business and property owners with improvements. Tax credits provide another avenue for financial assistance. The Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (ITC) provides tax incentives for owners of properties that are either historic or older than 50 years.

The Disabled Access Tax Credit, an IRS small business tax credit, can cover portions of eligible access expenditures such as barrier removal and alterations to improve accessibility. The Management Organization should work with local business and property owners to make them aware of these options.

4.1.9 Establish a “Ranger” program on the Drag.

Issue:

The presence of an organization on the street can contribute to the perception of the Drag as a safe and secure place.



The DAA Rangers Program.

Recommendation:

The UAP should fund a “roving ambassadors” similar to the Downtown Rangers. Perhaps the UAP can participate in the Downtown Alliance program to expand the Ranger’s range to include the Drag. Another alternative would be to work with the university and campus police to establish such a program. Students, particularly those living in West Campus, would be the primary beneficiaries of the added security afforded by such a program. Portland, Oregon has a very significant “ambassador” program wherein retired people answer questions, give out maps, and guide people in the use of the bus/rail systems.

4.1.10 Expand street-cleaning programs.

Issue:

The University Area Partners has been able to do more to control litter than most neighborhoods, thanks to their “Bag the Drag” days and their efforts to lobby the city for better services.



Street cleaning.

Recommendation:

A Management Organization should explore funding for a more intensive sidewalk-cleaning program, however. The Downtown Alliance offers one model, with their successful sidewalk-sweeping machine. They have also contracted with Gardiner-Betts Juvenile Center for youths performing community service, with mixed success. The Downtown Alliance also has a successful graffiti removal program.

Even without funding, the Management Organization can encourage more businesses to clean the sidewalks in front of their shops on a daily basis, and to clean graffiti and other vandalism as soon as it appears.

4.2

BUSINESSES ON THE DRAG

The greatest opportunity for the Drag to continue to promote itself and encourage future growth is to capitalize on the retail opportunities already in place. The Drag and the Renaissance Market are both unique in Austin for their character, their history, and their convenience. But more can be done, both by individual business owners and collective management organizations, to promote the Drag as a shopping experience available to University students, Downtown area residents, Austinites, and tourists alike. Continued growth, though, requires continued efforts to increase business and bring a greater variety of retail to the Drag.

4.2.1 Promote the Drag as a place to shop, for the university community as well as the city at large.*Issue:*

Businesses can individually or collectively create special promotions.

Recommendation:

Take out group ads in the local papers that emphasize the wealth and diversity of businesses on the Drag. The DAA has created a good model for this with their map. Organize special activities to welcome new students and introduce them to the Drag. Find out how businesses can participate in student orientation sessions.

The Drag must also overcome image problems, especially regarding safety. Refer to Safety Issues and Vendor and Music Programs for more ideas on improving the image of the Drag as a place to shop.

4.2.2 Revamp the Renaissance Market and expand it to include the sidewalk vendor program.*Issue:*

The Renaissance Market is one of the most important and historic aspects of the Drag. In its heyday it was vibrant and successful, drawing people and tourists from all over the city. In recent years it has dwindled to a few lonely booths, and it is in danger of becoming extinct. It would truly be a tragedy if Austin and the Drag were to lose this important link to a defining era.

Recommendation:

The Renaissance Market must be reinvigorated in ways that allow it to remain true to the spirit of independence that created the market. The idea of street vending should include the Drag itself.



A place to shop.

The University CO-OP has acquired the adjacent building on the Market’s north side and therefore now owns both edges of the market area. If the CO-OP developed these edges that face each other as retail frontage the market dynamic would change dramatically. People would occupy the “sidewalk” edges and the vendors would occupy the central “street” zone.

The sidewalk edges of the market should be occupied by outdoor seating for restaurants, and outdoor displays of books and flowers. No other products should be allowed.



Improve booth structures and arrangement.

The vendors in the street zone should be located in two rows east to west facing north and south towards the two sidewalk edges, and inwardly to the central path created between the two rows. No vendors should be facing the Drag. This market should be further designed with the 23rd Street Improvement Project.

4.2.3 Improve the booth structures and arrangement.

Issue:

Currently, vendors set up wherever they can on a first-come basis. Booths tend to line up facing the street, forming a barrier to the interior of the market. Even though students come pouring through the market, most pass behind the booths, between the booths and the building walls, instead of in front where they would see the wares.

Recommendation:

The arrangement of booths is important and should be more closely and fairly regulated, with vendors paying higher fees for the better spots.

Fee revenue should fund a lightweight structure of cloth canopies that is erected and taken down daily. The shade they would provide would make the market area more comfortable and pleasant, as well as help to give the space a sense of presence and definition. The proposed gateway structure (see Section 4.2.2) will also help improve the presence of the market on the Drag.

In addition, the Market should consider having live music on a regular basis, perhaps on weekend afternoons. The musicians should set up in the rear of the market near the alley, yet be visible and audible from the sidewalk, to draw people through the market. Refer to Section 4.2.8.

4.2.4 Recruit more food vendors to the Drag.

Issue:

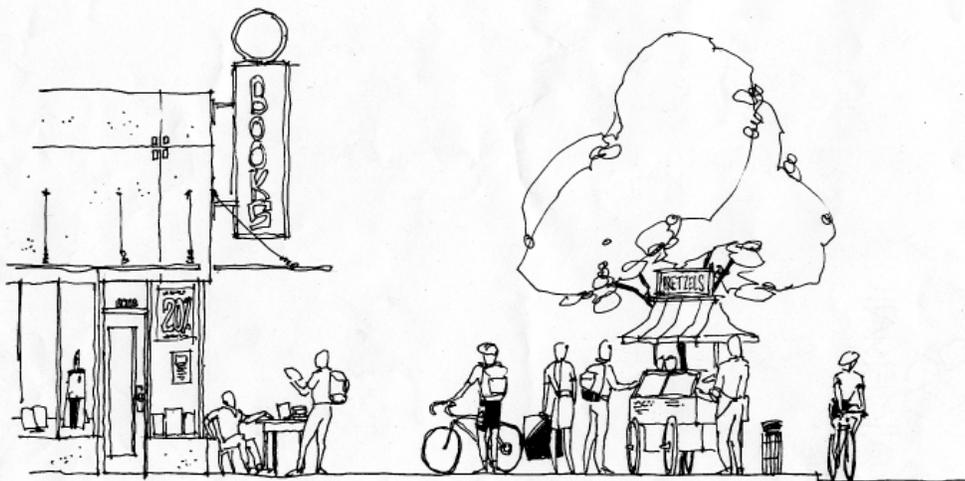
Vendors on the sidewalk can potentially make very important contributions to the Drag. By providing “eyes on the street” they improve safety and discourage vandalism; they add color and vibrancy to sidewalks that otherwise may seem empty and desolate; food vendors help attract people to the Drag and add a sense of fun.

Recommendation:

The recommended new management organization and the UAP should actively recruit a variety of food vendors to the Drag, siting each vendor at a specific spot on the sidewalk. Power outlets at the base of the new light fixtures should be made available to vendors (see Section 2.2.6), with the utility bills paid by their permit fees. Noisy power generators should be prohibited. Vendors should be encouraged to set out tables and chairs around their booths. The management organization should promulgate the rules for the street vendor operations in concert with existing city street vendor regulations. There are many successful examples of this in other cities.



A colorful food vendor.



4.2.5 Restrict vendors to food and handcrafted items.

Issue:



Food vendors and craft vendors should provide a great complement to one another, creating a synergetic relationship. Currently, however, the separate programs set up a competitive situation.

Recommendation:

The sidewalk vendor program should be brought under the auspices of the new management organization. Vendors should be restricted to food, beverages, produce, fresh flowers, and hand crafted wares, with the crafts and produce booths located in the market area and food vendors on the Guadalupe sidewalk between 23rd and 24th Streets.



The quality of handcrafted items.

A key food vendor should be located toward the rear of the Market area, near the alley, to draw people through the market. Tables and chairs should be provided, to create an outdoor cafe that will provide enough of a draw. The potential of including a farmer's market should also be explored.

4.2.6 Increase the number and quality of craft vendors.

Issue:

The most important improvement to the market would be an increase in the number of high quality craft vendors to the Market.

Recommendation:

Paradoxically, this would be best accomplished by raising the permit fees. An increase in fees would insure that only serious vendors with quality goods would participate. The revenue from the fees could fund improvements to the market area, signage, and advertising to attract shoppers. An increase in foot traffic, in turn, would attract more vendors. Incentives should also be put in place to encourage vendors to set up in the market year round, not just at Christmas.



Street Fairs encourage continued business.

4.2.7 Create and maintain a yearly street fair / festival.

Issue:

The Guadalupe Street Fair accomplished a great deal toward promoting the Drag, bringing the corridor to people's attention, and encouraging people to discover the Drag as a place to come for shopping or entertainment. The fair was cancelled after two exciting, successful years because of lack of resources.

Recommendation:

A street fair / festival should not only be held every year, organizers should work hard to encourage ever-greater participation, as well as new ideas and activities to keep it fresh. A street fair should become institutionalized as an Austin tradition.

4.2.8 Add music to the program.*Issue:*

Harvard Square, the commercial district at the edge of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, jump-started its revitalization with a street musician, or “busser,” program. On weekend evenings, particularly during the summer, people come from all over the Boston area to walk around the Square and enjoy the music, as well as magicians and other street performers. The musicians receive very good tips, and the good spots are competitively sought after. The best acts receive the best tips, which helps insure the quality of the performers. Businesses stay open late and enjoy brisk business, especially the area’s many bookstores.

*Recommendation:*

The UAP or the recommended management organization should start a similar street performer program, starting with a weekly regularly set time, perhaps Friday evenings. Musicians should be actively recruited, identified with the assistance of local music storeowners and the Cactus Cafe. Businesses should make an effort to be open during these hours, and sidewalk and Renaissance Market vendors should be encouraged to set up. Most importantly, the music program should be widely publicized throughout the city and on campus.



Music and special events.

The UAP should contact the City of Cambridge to learn of their “busser” program, and the Downtown Alliance, to learn from their experiences with their First Nights program and noontime concerts. The Drag’s music program should be more frequent, at least weekly, and smaller in scale than the DAA’s First Night series.

4.2.9 Increase evening activity on the Drag.*Issue:*

Businesses that are lit and open on the Drag, with more people out and about, will go a long way to improving the safety of the Drag at night. Businesses on the Drag should organize to have consistent evening hours. When businesses are not open, their display windows should be lit to encourage window-shopping.

Recommendation:

Restaurants and other evening hour businesses should be recruited to the Drag. The UAP should work with the student union to revamp the film program, with an entrance

to the theater that is visible from the street. Refer to the music program described in Section 4.2.8 for other ideas on ways to increase evening activities.

4.2.10 Organize short-term public parking so that it is easy to find and user-friendly.

Issue:

The Drag must overcome a perception that there is no place to park.

Recommendation:

Work with the university to open up their parking garage to the public at night and on weekends. Work with parking vendors to provide an organized system of public parking that is easy for the public to find and understand, and advertise parking availability. Ask parking vendors to provide less expensive rates for short term parking (2 hours) that encourages shoppers and high turnover. Work with Capital Metro to advertise to “downtowners” the ease with which they can come to the Drag from downtown. Learn from the experiences of the Downtown Alliance and their efforts to organize parking and transit.

4.2.11 Encourage tourists to come to the Drag.

Issue:

Tourism as a customer base for businesses on the Drag is under-capitalized. Little is done to encourage tourists to come to the Drag, much less make it convenient for them to visit or otherwise welcome them.

Recommendations:

Analyze the feasibility of attracting lodging to the West Campus area (Refer to Section 4.1.5) especially B&Bs and small inns. Other than one or two small B&Bs in West Campus, most visitors to the university must stay in chain motels on the far side of campus, from which they must make a special effort to visit the Drag.

Encourage the university to place their visitor parking near the Drag. Provide information promoting the Drag as a destination at the Capitol and the Convention Center, and how tourists may reach the Drag by foot or Dillo. Work with the Visitor’s Bureau on ways to promote the Drag as a destination.

The Drag often is a specific destination for tourists and its rich history should build on this. Walking tours could be offered, and tour providers who organize tours around specific themes, such as music history or university history, should be encouraged to include the Drag on their itineraries. The Art Program, described in Section 2.3, also offers an opportunity to capitalize on the Drag’s rich history.



The convenience of the Drag.

5.0

CONCLUSION

The Drag has witnessed numerous generations of Austinites discover its treasures and learn of its lore. Today, the Drag is underused, struggling from a somewhat tainted image, and striving to continue to assert the importance of the pedestrian to its survival. Work must be done to restore the infrastructure of the Drag, allowing future Austin residents and University students the opportunity to enjoy all the vibrancy and vitality the Drag has to offer.

Phase I of the Streetscape Improvements, encompassing the Drag between 21st Street and 24th Street, cannot succeed as the sole physical improvement opportunity undertaken. Currently, the City of Austin is planning an improvement project for the Renaissance Market and 23rd Street, which will extend revitalization efforts into the adjacent West Campus neighborhood. With the possible advent of rapid transit and light rail in the future, the Drag may receive more attention, and even more physical improvements and capital investiture. However, none of these future projects can be “waited on.” It is up to the University Area Partners, the University of Texas, and the Drag business and property owners to establish and participate in a management organization, to seek further sources of funding, and to take a positive stand towards the future of the Drag.

IMPLEMENTATION SEQUENCE

The completion of Phase I should be followed quickly with the remaining Phases II and III. Currently, the optimum sequence would be:

- Begin Phase I construction; Begin Phase II construction documents
- Complete Phase I construction, plant street trees
- Permit and bid Phase II
- Begin Phase II construction
- Begin Phase III construction documents
- Complete Phase II, plant street trees
- Permit and bid Phase III
- Begin Phase III construction
- Complete Phase III construction, plant street trees

6.0**PROJECT DRAWINGS** (*SEPARATE VOLUME*)

Phase I: 21st Street to 24th Street

Phase II: MLK Boulevard to 21st Street
24th Street to 26th Street (Dean Keeton Street)

Phase III: 26th Street (Dean Keeton Street) to 29th Street

NOTE:

Project drawings issued to the client exclusively in a separate 11" x 17" volume.