

ATX

A Redevelopment
Scenario for the
West End

Lab Notations v2



ATX

A Redevelopment Scenario for the West End



Texas Urban Futures Lab
The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture

Dean Almy PROF.

Assistants

Jeffrey Blocksidge M.ARCH I
Xiwei Chen MSUD

Researchers

Tica Chitrarachis MLA
Jose Garcia M.ARCH II
Yu-Tang Hsieh MSCRP-MSUD
Jessi Koch MSCRP-MSUD
Jinah Lee MSUD
Sishuo Liu MSUD
Jon Mautz MLA II
Lauren Vogl M.ARCH II
Samantha Whitney Schwarze M.ARCH II
Abby Wiltse MLA II
Jihye Yun MSUD



Contents

- 7 Introduction
- 11 Urban Futures
- 17 A Neighborhood in Flux
- 19 Austin Futures
- 23 Old West Austin Neighborhood Association | Goals

- 25 Twelve Principles for the West End
- 29 **DE** Density
- 91 **MO** Mobility
- 127 **LA** Landscape

Introduction



The Old West Austin Neighborhood Association Zoning Committee frequently fields calls about development on West 6th Street and West 5th Street between Lamar Boulevard and the Mopac Expressway. Often, the City of Austin staff tells developers that those two corridors are “wide open for commercialization and development”. Over the years, zoning meetings involving prospective projects have ranged from a zoning change to accommodate a restaurant, to a request for a 400-foot mixed-use, residential and hotel tower. In the past, the zoning committee has said, “thanks for your interest in our neighborhood, but no thank you.” Instead of saying “no” and have development happen anyway (because the city is encouraging it) the neighborhood decided to be proactive and start a conversation about the development of the West End District.

Neighborhood representatives met with local property owners and the Chair of the Planning Commission (a fellow neighbor) to discuss the concept of a proactive conversation about this development. The group decided to showcase a “vision for those corridors” to show the city, commissions, boards, city council and prospective developers. Members of the Old West Austin Neighborhood Association, residents, business owners, developers and land owners got together to make this conversation happen. As a result, the 5th and 6th St. Vision Committee began in 2010.

After a year of deliberations, UT urban design professor Dean Almy approached us about working together on a semester-long student project, under the agency of the Texas Urban Futures Lab, to envision a potential development scenario for the West End. We knew then that this would be an opportunity to start a conversation not only with the city but with the cadre of students and thinkers at the University's School of Architecture.

As part of the process, students, residents and business owners took part in a public design charrette that outlined how future development could help meet many of the OWANA goals. This cross-pollination generated an extremely helpful level of detail in our vision that will aid in communicating our desire for finding the middle ground solution in the coming years. The students presented our shared vision to council members at City Hall.

This book is the record of that collaboration; a finely calibrated project intended to bring out the latent characteristics of the West End, while drawing from the best practices in urban design. It is intended as a framework for development that will serve as a guide for residents, property owners and businesses to build a more humane and sustainable future while preserving and enhancing the qualities of Austin's West End and its adjacent neighborhoods. We hope that this joint effort with the Texas Urban Futures Lab will show that many of the interests of businesses and property owners are not in conflict with the interests of residents, and that all groups may derive mutual benefit from the enhancement and preservation of this special place.

- The 5th and 6th St. Vision Committee

“This is a finely calibrated project intended to bring out the characteristics of the West End while drawing from the best practices of urban design.”



Urban Futures



Much of the Texas landscape is subject to economic exploitation brought about by a deregulated and market-driven set of environmental policies. Development forces fundamentally drive the *laissez-faire* outcomes of the state's urban future and cities attempt to manage projects driven by the development industry. Many Texas cities have turned to private interests, public-private partnerships and/or non-profits for help. While planning departments may be progressive in attempting to administer the outcomes, other interests are often responsible for advocating and achieving real qualitative transformation within Texas cities.

In Dallas, organizations such as Downtown Dallas and The Trinity Trust are among the principle non-profits that are attempting to guide much of the development emerging along the Trinity River and in the urban core. Central Houston is another non-profit in which representatives from the city's major corporations come together to guide the future of Houston's urban environment, largely due to the realization that they all have a collective interest in doing-so. In central Austin, citizens in the form of neighborhood planning groups and city commissions drive much of this regulatory activity. This has established a largely defensive posture to the future, unsurprisingly protective of those unique qualities that have made Austin one of the most livable cities in the United States.

The major metropolitan areas in Texas comprise a mega-region that has been defined as the Texas Triangle. (Steiner, et al. 2009) By 2030, it is projected that 70 percent of the population of Texas will live in the Texas Triangle, while the population in Austin is projected to grow by 750,000 residents by the year 2040. (Imagine Austin, 2012) Growth of this magnitude threatens to consume the ecological resources of the region and overwhelm the distinctive characteristics that have made central Austin so desirable a place to live. Initiatives such as: Envision Central Texas, a regional-scale planning effort, and Imagine Austin, a city-wide comprehensive planning enterprise, have attempted to harness development forces in Austin, while localized task forces such as the West End's 5th/6th Vision Committee are engaged in bringing the discussion to the neighborhood level. These initiatives build consensus in setting policy and agendas that, to some degree, establish scenarios for the future. However, what they cannot do is answer the question of how these new environments might be constructed. What might it really be like to live there? This is the territory in which urban design and landscape architecture play a significant role.

The Texas Urban Futures Laboratory is a mechanism for grounding the Graduate Program in Urban Design at the School of Architecture into these larger questions; overlapping applied design-based research, teaching, and service to the state. We began to talk with professionals, stakeholders, residents, and associated interest groups, asking them what their growth scenarios and visions for the future were—beyond those embedded in traditional planning documents. The TUFLab® then began to make proposals as to what these scenarios could be like, and what the implications of planning policy really meant to the construction of the physical environment.

The Urban Futures Lab began in Dallas as the Dallas Urban Laboratory and has now expanded its scope into the larger mega-region of the

Texas Triangle: Dallas, Austin, San Antonio and Houston. Looking to other schools as models, we have sought to establish a laboratory at the University in conjunction with these Texas cities as a non-partisan institution engaging in the debate about the future. Under the Center for Sustainable Development, the Lab looks at its research and asks how this information and subsequent policy decisions affect the form and space of our cities. The Lab also looks to bring in experts from architecture, landscape architecture and planning, among other disciplines, to examine urbanization in Texas, go beyond the public initiatives, and precisely show the kind of urban environments possible given these high-pressure development sites across the state. The role of our work is to enter the discussion and hopefully steer it toward a more sustainable trajectory.

Of course, judging the outcomes of this synthetic research is extremely difficult. Defining the value of design as a projective practice is difficult to measure and "prove." In design-based research, the primary way of evaluating the potential success of a project is through a study of best practices or peer evaluation. The design process is not just about invention; it's also about principles - what one knows has worked, why, and where. What is the applicability of those tactics here? As a form of applied research, understanding best practices within systems affecting the mobility, density, landscape or public space of the city, and then testing them on a particular problem in a real site is a constant process of evaluating the potential of a place. Still, that evaluation is largely tied to an intuitive knowledge that builds up over time, through harnessing local capacity or drawing upon disciplinary expertise. It is this kind of knowledge, coupled with design rigor, research and a service-oriented perspective, that the Laboratory strives to nurture in practice.

- Dean Almy, Texas Urban Futures Laboratory



Lamar St.

6th St.

A District in Flux

The West End is changing as Austin itself changes. As an interface between the historic single-family neighborhoods to the north and the post-industrial land established against the train tracks to the south, the West End is poised for transformation. Many historic single-family homes have been converted into professional offices, while storage warehouses, auto repair shops and light industrial uses have gradually dispersed, leaving vacant land parcels and opportunities for urban redevelopment. As the industrial economy gradually disappears from the urban landscape, new urban programs are set to move into the area.

The urban corridors of 5th and 6th streets have long connected downtown Austin to the surrounding city. Here, the seeds of urbanization can be found: sidewalk retail, a neighborhood center and a burgeoning design district are slowly changing the character and relevance of the property along these corridors, while their position adjacent to the urban core and between the old west side neighborhoods and Lady Bird Lake Park make it a major economic target. In the face of this new economic potential, a lack of pedestrian connectivity is further stifled by traffic flows favoring high-speed commuting through the district, land parcels that are inappropriately sized for high quality urban development, and a lack of public infrastructure to mediate between the new development and the larger public sphere.



West End Futures

Through a very extensive public process, the city of Austin has eventually arrived at a consensus for the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan - a touchstone from which developers, neighborhoods, and various constituents in the city can begin to work towards a shared vision of how they want to manage growth in the future. The Old West Austin Neighborhood Association (OWANA), which straddles the West End research area, opted out of the plan. This was not done as part of an effort to curb future changes to the district, but in response to the agenda of a city perceived as encouraging urban development at the expense of longstanding neighborhood integrity. This tension has created a divergence between what representatives of the neighborhood know: that change is coming to the West End, and how the Imagine Austin Plan has designated the area: as 'undeveloped.'

This absurd designation, codified in the Imagine Austin Plan betrays a lack of direction, while the city's growth scenario maps, included within the Imagine Austin plan, designate the West End as a 'mixed-use corridor' and future transit maps, prepared by CAMPO, designate this corridor as a candidate for future urban rail expansion. The adjacent Mopac rail line also makes the district a prime candidate to benefit from regional commuter rail conversion. While a pedestrian focus and high-quality civic spaces are

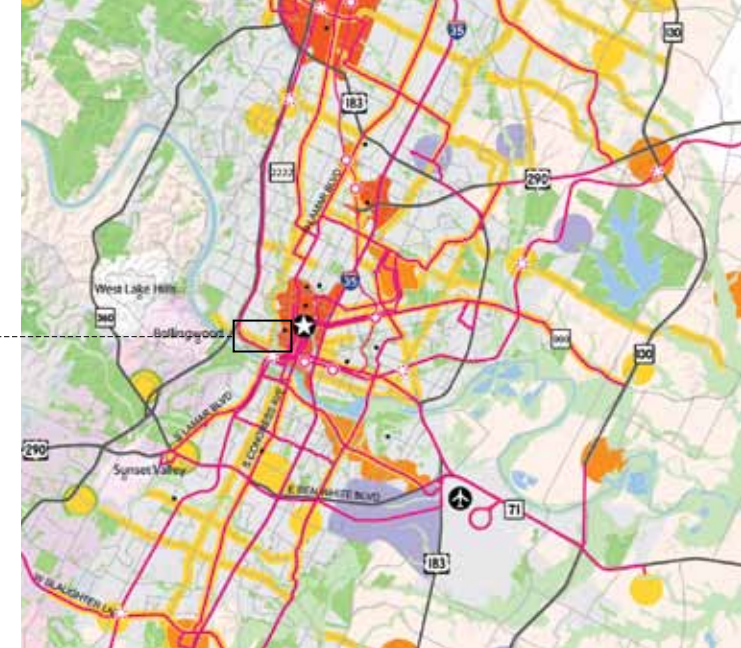
“Appropriate density, a pedestrian focus and high-quality civic spaces.”

among the goals embedded within the Imagine Austin plan, these goals also align with the neighborhood’s vision for the future. In fact, many of the principles embedded within the Imagine Austin plan are of mutual benefit to both the city and the neighborhoods. This not only makes future collaboration ideologically permissible but potentially very enriching within the context of Austin’s participatory urban process.

This project is a product of a joint task force, among the first in the city to be formed by stakeholders, business interests and neighborhood representatives, outside of the political context of city hall. These constituencies have come together in the face of impending development in order to manage change and govern their urban future.

The future development of the West End represents a unique opportunity for the Texas Urban Futures Lab as well. An opportunity to play a supportive role - as neither representatives of the development community nor as representatives of the neighborhood - but as advocates for the use of best practices in the projection of an urban future for the West End. While attempting to balance the diverse agendas of adjacent neighborhoods, the forces of development and the city of Austin, we hope to stimulate the conversation through the TUFlab’s visualization capabilities. For us, the project is more than an academic exercise, for we too are citizens of Austin and have an interest in its future and our task is to construct a scenario that responds to all sides of the political divide.

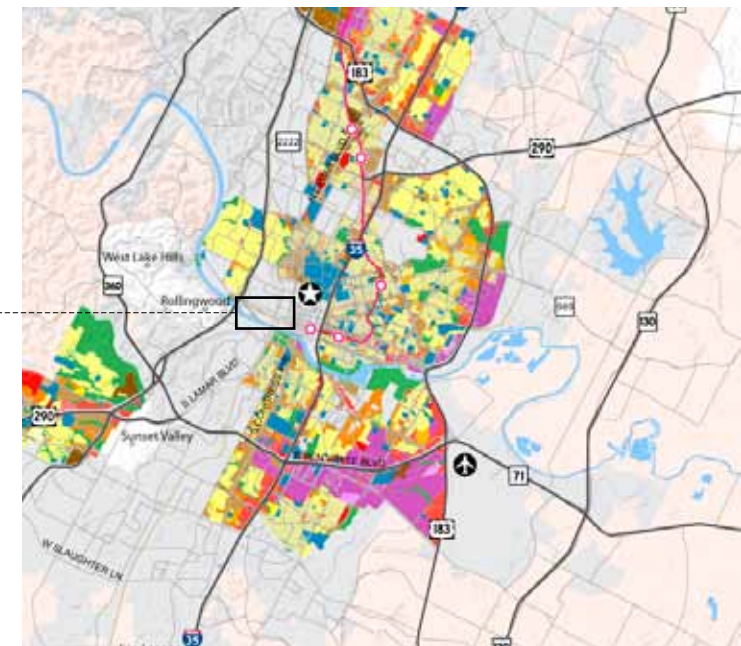
Mixed Use Corridor



Austin Growth Concept Map

source: City of Austin, 2012

Undeveloped



Austin Future Land Use Map

source: City of Austin, 2012

OWANA Neighborhood Association | Goals

- 1 Encourage mixed uses
- 2 Protect the character of the neighborhood
- 3 Maintain social and economic diversity of residents
- 4 Provide safe movement for all modes throughout neighborhood
- 5 Accessibility - Provide access to, from, and through the neighborhood for all residents.
- 6 Circulation - Allow neighborhood streets to function for circulation, while calming cut-through traffic
- 7 Mobility - Provide for movement of through traffic into and out of downtown.
- 8 Aesthetics - Create attractive, pedestrian-friendly public spaces in the neighborhood.
- 9 Provide adequate parking for neighborhood residents and businesses.
- 10 Reduce traffic noise
- 11 Improve existing parks and increase recreational amenities in the neighborhood
- 12 Preserve and improve green space
- 13 Preserve and enhance the unique historic identity of the neighborhood.

source: Old West Austin Neighborhood Plan, 2000

Twelve Principles for the West End

DE | Density

- 1 Capitalize on adjacent development to integrate the West End into the future landscape of the city.
- 2 Create an appropriately scaled block and parcel structure to integrate new development with existing neighborhoods.
- 3 Develop a form-based regulatory framework that will establish greater control over development outcomes.
- 4 Allow for the necessary density to establish significant social places that will support an urban quality of life.
- 5 Catalyze the economic potential of the district by providing opportunities for local micro-economic ventures, together with macro-economic investment.
- 6 Incentivize the provision of neighborhood benefits through the creation of a density bonus program or TIF district.

MO | Mobility

- 7 Create an integrated network of multi-modal streets.
- 8 Provide the necessary infrastructure to support future urban rail.
- 9 Create pedestrian linkages from the neighborhood through the West End to Lady Bird Lake.

LA | Landscape

- 10 Develop a network of places that cater to both local residents and the community at large.
- 11 Create an urban porch for the West End to provide a social hub for the district with visual connections to Lady Bird Lake.
- 12 Use “green infrastructure” strategies to mitigate pollutant runoff into the watershed of Lady Bird Lake and address long-term water conservation.

DE | Density

1

Capitalize on adjacent development to integrate the West End into the future landscape of the city.



Development Catalysts



1 Brackenridge Tract



5 Seaholm Power Plant



9 Federal Courthouse



2 Mopac Commuter Rail



6 Austin Energy Control Center



10 Green Water Treatment Plant



3 West End District



7 Austin Central Library



11 Republic Square



4 YMCA



8 Block 51



12 Waller Creek Plan

What are the ongoing parameters that are going to set the stage for the problem? The first are the agendas and policies of the Imagine Austin plan, the second is what's happening on the ground: the development catalysts that are under construction, on the boards, in the planning process or are projected to occur in the next twenty years.

The catalysts map was our way of talking back to the task force and saying 'we know you have limited ambitions; you desire crosswalks, slower traffic, street lights, but we think you have to look bigger and broader than that.' Significant change is coming. There are 25 high rises in downtown Austin that weren't there in the year 2000. So though it may seem like development pace is slow on the ground, ten years can bring massive changes. The population is still expected to double. Where are the people going to go? If we believe in sustainability, increasing density from 2.6 to 4.6 units per acre in an area such as the West End, which is designated as a mixed-use corridor, is simply not enough.

DE | Density

2

Create a block and parcel structure to integrate new development with existing neighborhoods.



Existing Block Scale

Larger Blocks



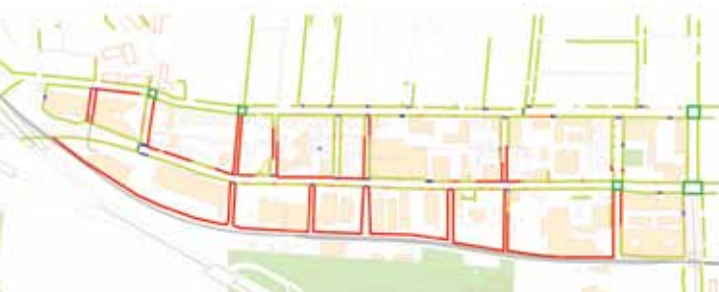
Under-Developed Properties

The West End is a complex urban environment. There are a number of factors that exacerbate the problem of its ability to be connected with the larger city. One important factor is the size and disposition of the existing land parcels and the size of the resultant blocks. The scale of blocks in a city is directly related to its porosity - or the ease in which people can move through the urban environment. This movement is critical to the way that urban fabric works as a social and economic mechanism. One of our first strategies for the West End was to locate opportunities for scaling down the blocks from the existing larger post-industrial landscape to a more appropriate size for integrated urban development.

Barriers to Connectivity



Barriers

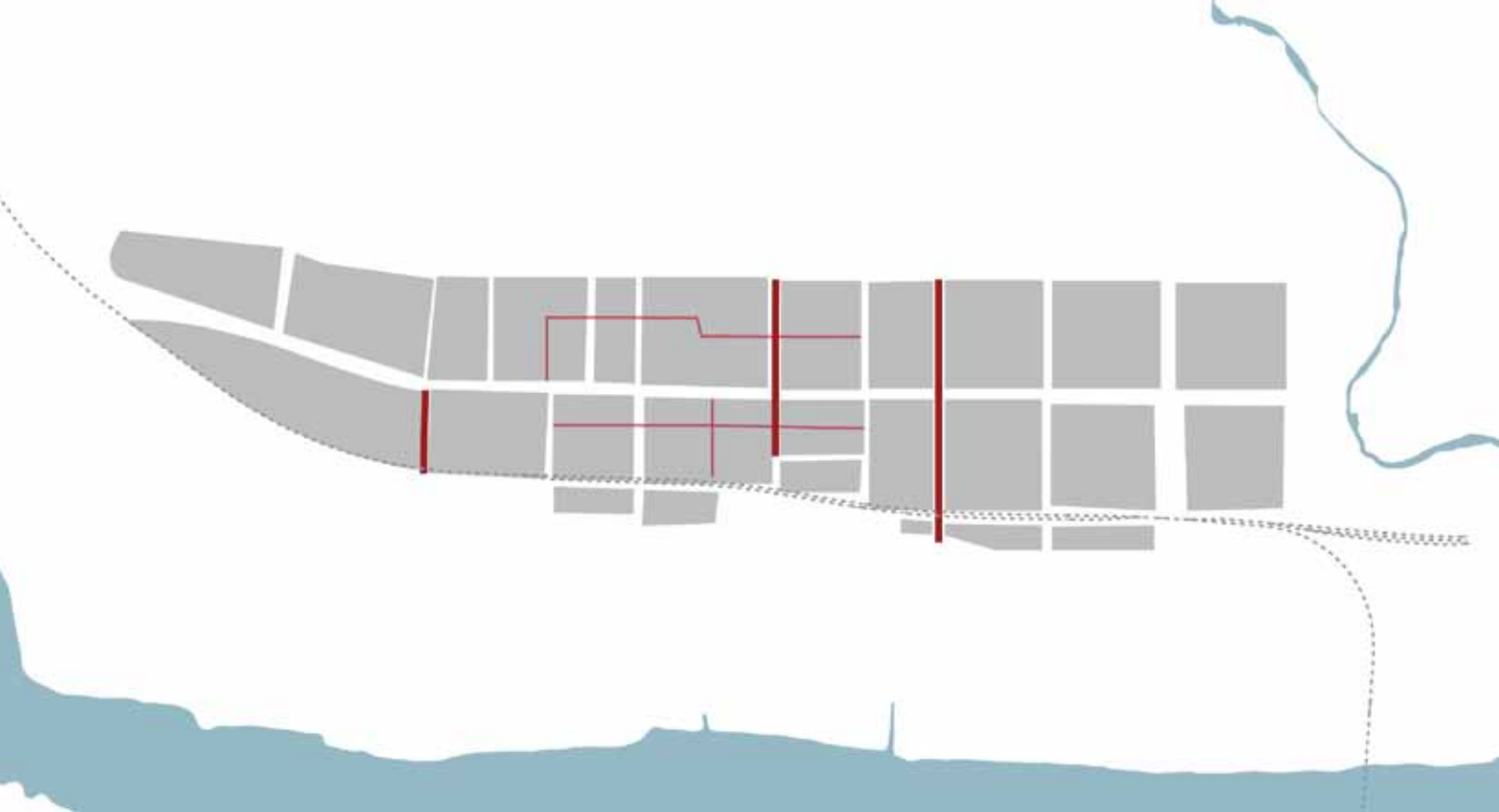


Existing Sidewalks

The historic location of the West End, situated in relation to Austin's central business district, has produced the current situation whereby primary access through the district runs east-west. This has created a set of barriers that disconnect the west side neighborhoods, located to the north, from Lady Bird Lake and the adjacent park, located to the south.

A significant barrier to this connectivity is the traffic couplet formed by 5th and 6th streets, both being large one-way collectors, four lanes each, designed to move traffic through the district. Second are the large tracts of underused, post-industrial land proximate to the freight rail line. This line, the Mopac (Missouri-Pacific) railway, is the third barrier, as crossing it requires a significant sectional separation. The fourth barrier is the grade change down to the recreational programs on the lake. The fifth is the Cesar Chavez Boulevard extension and its connection to the Mopac expressway. These are the significant obstacles preventing easy access between the neighborhood and the lake.

Connective Strategies



Proposed Blocks



Proposed Sidewalks

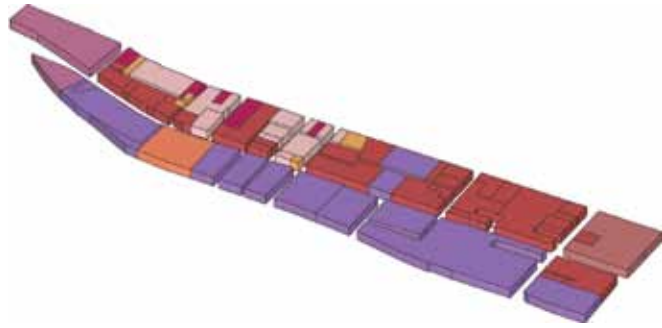
One of the primary goals of the OWANA neighborhood association is to increase accessibility within the neighborhood and between the neighborhood and the lake. This means finding a way to overcome the barriers. To this end, we developed a set of strategies to guide the project. Principal among them is a tactic for reducing the size of the block structure that makes it difficult for public access across the district.

Many of these land parcels were formerly dedicated to industry and have been consolidated into excessively large and impenetrable areas. The new framework proposes reducing the block sizes to a more permeable scale. This not only provides accessibility, but also allows the project to determine the size of the blocks according to the size of the development desired to take place. A system of public infrastructure - streets and sidewalks - designed to facilitate pedestrian activity, and the establishment of public spaces and programs, creates an active public realm reinforcing this new development framework.

DE | Density

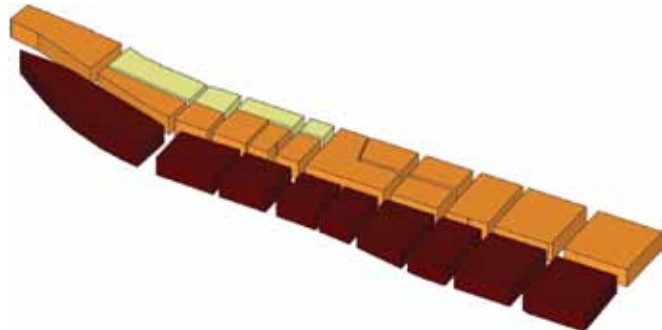
3

Develop a form-based regulatory framework that will establish greater control over development outcomes.



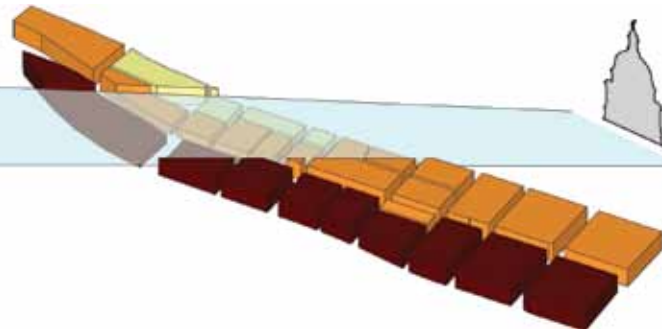
Existing Zoning

A mixture of commercial, industrial and residential uses that all heights of up to 60 feet.



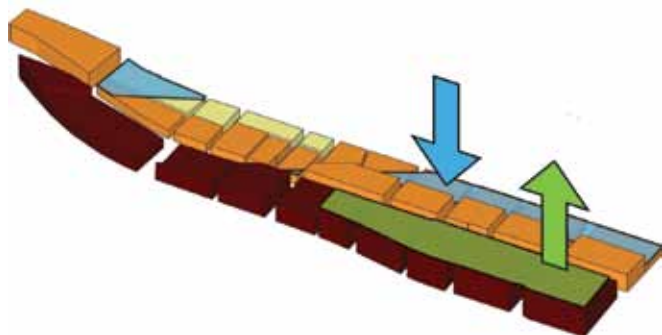
Mixed-Use Zoning

Under Mixed-Use zoning, the city of Austin allows a maximum height of 120 feet.



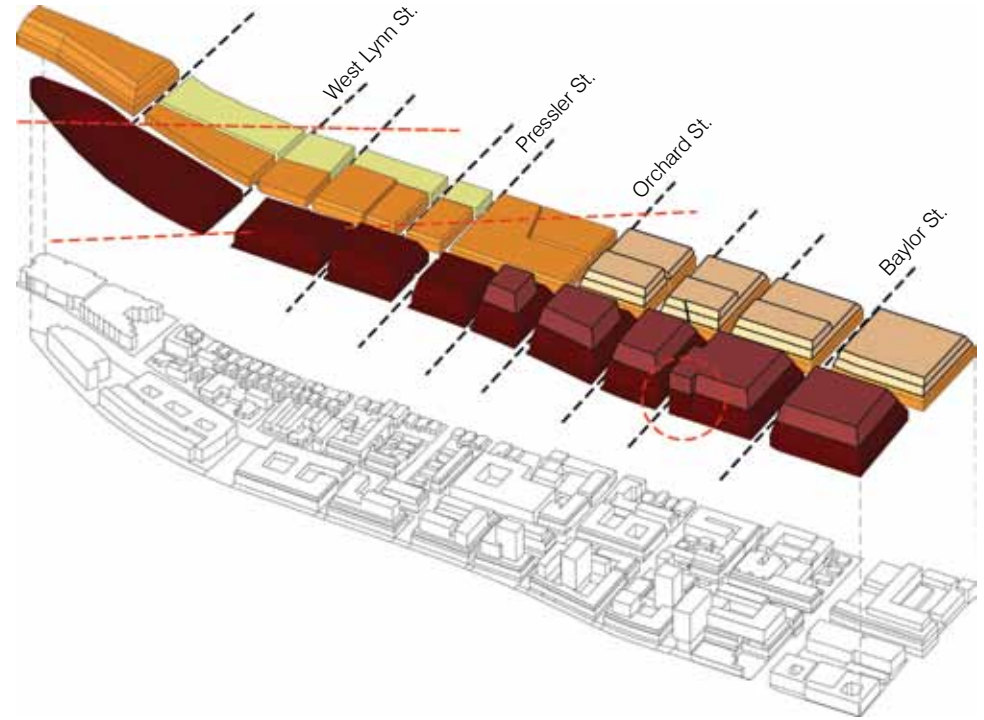
View Corridor

The presence of a capitol view corridor cuts down the 120 feet Mixed-Use height in some areas, bringing it back down to approximately 60 feet.



Proposed Code

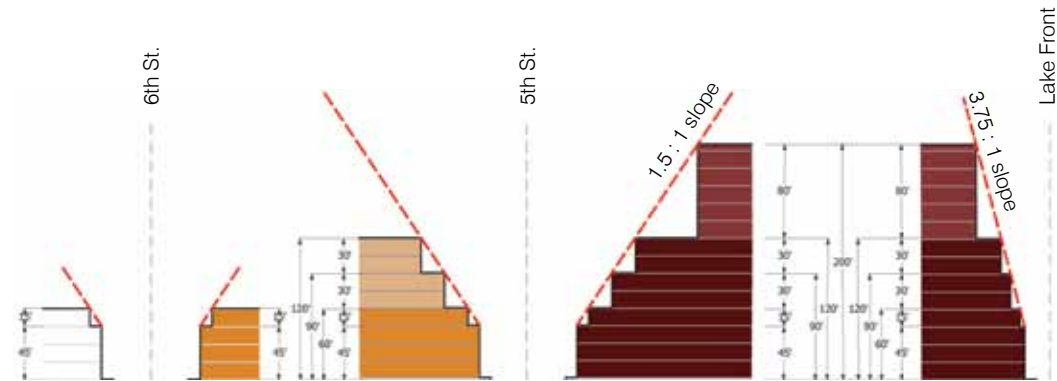
We propose a graduated volumetric code that mediates between the scale of development between Clarksville and the park edge.



The TUFlab® has developed a tactic for allowing a greater density of build-out through a careful look at the impact of the regulatory frameworks currently in place. The city has proposed overlaying the West End with blanket mixed-use zoning that would cap all new development at 120 feet. This approach doesn't allow for maintaining the sensitive relationships between different parts of the district.

Therefore, we've developed a process to reduce those zoning envelopes in areas that interface with the existing neighborhood while compensating for that reduction by increasing the building envelopes along the district's southern edge overlooking the lake, and farthest away from the neighborhood. This highly localized and specific regulatory framework is compatible with the goals of the neighborhood association while satisfying the development communities desire to provide greater density and capitalizing on the economic potential of the park edge

Sky Plane Setbacks



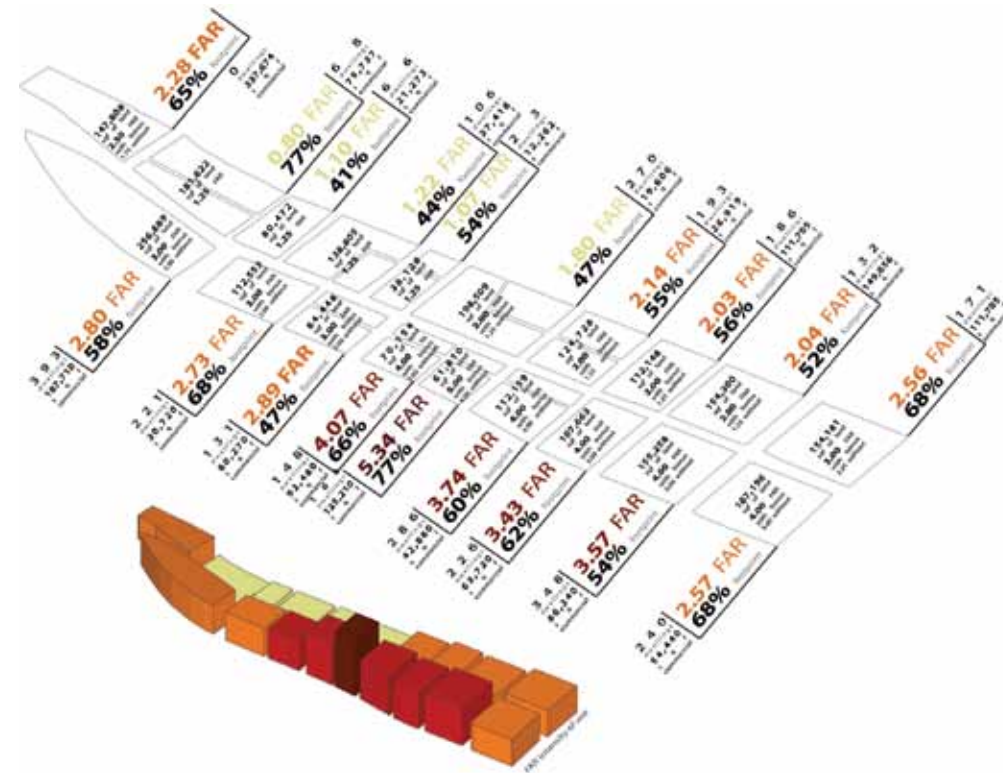
5th and 6th Street Slope

This gentler slope creates an urban environment without creating a feeling of enclosure. This slope also sets back higher densities to the middle of the block. The gradual setback allows sunlight to come down to the street.

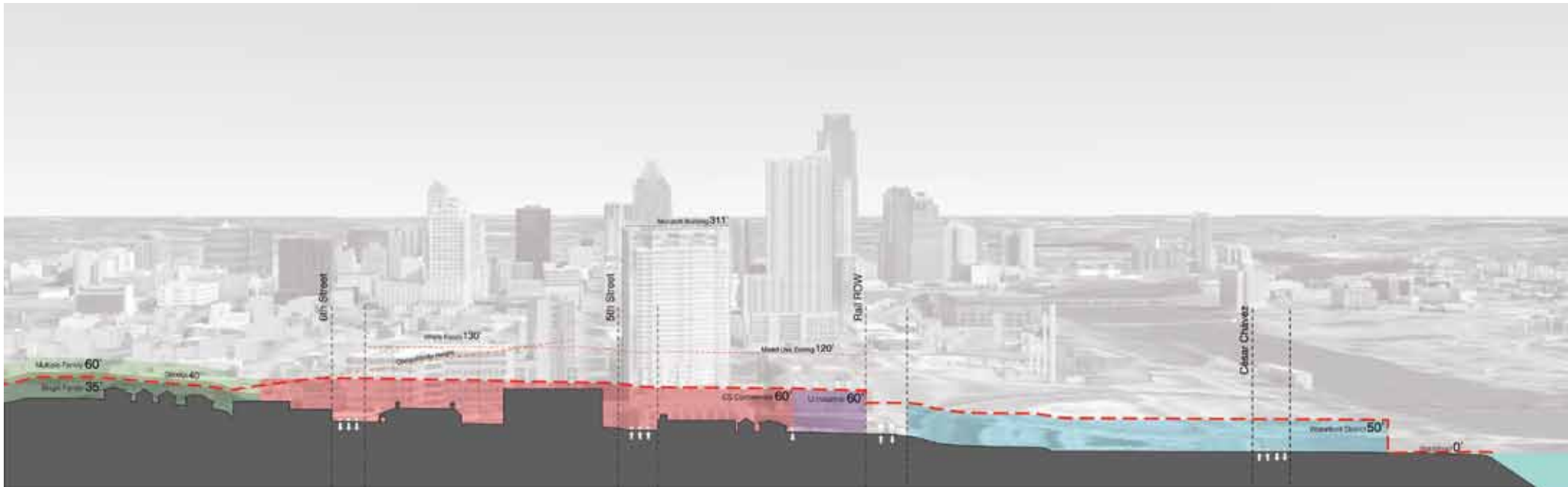
Park Front and Side Street Slope

This more severe slope is still gradual in order to break the 'urban wall' effect that is characteristic of other medium and high density environments.

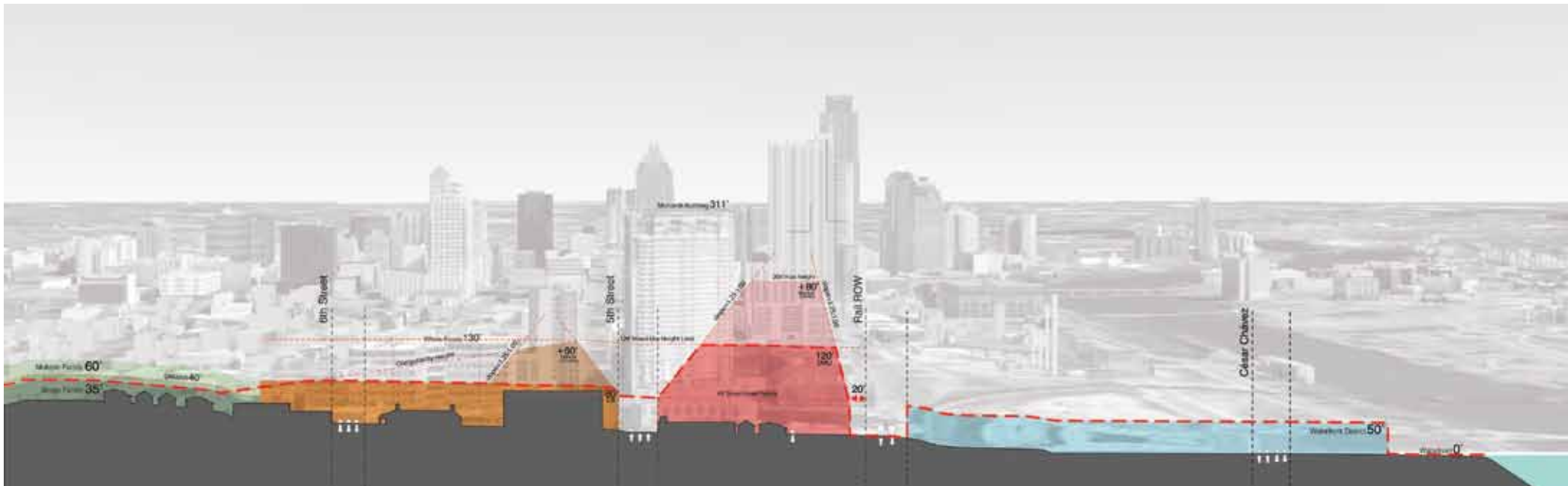
Maximum Potential Buildout



Our scenario for the maximum potential build-out of the West End is based upon the provision of new, highly-specific volumetric regulations, along with a series of density bonus provisions that are established in order to balance the economic potential of future development with returning public benefits to residents of the district and the surrounding neighborhoods.



Existing Allowable Building Heights



Proposed Volumetric Regulations

DE | Density

4

Allow for the necessary density to establish significant social places that will support an urban quality of life.

Density Prototypes



Dallas, TX 2.3 units/acre



Kansas City, KS 4.7 units/acre



Washington DC 21.8 units/acre



Tampa, FL 29.9 units/acre



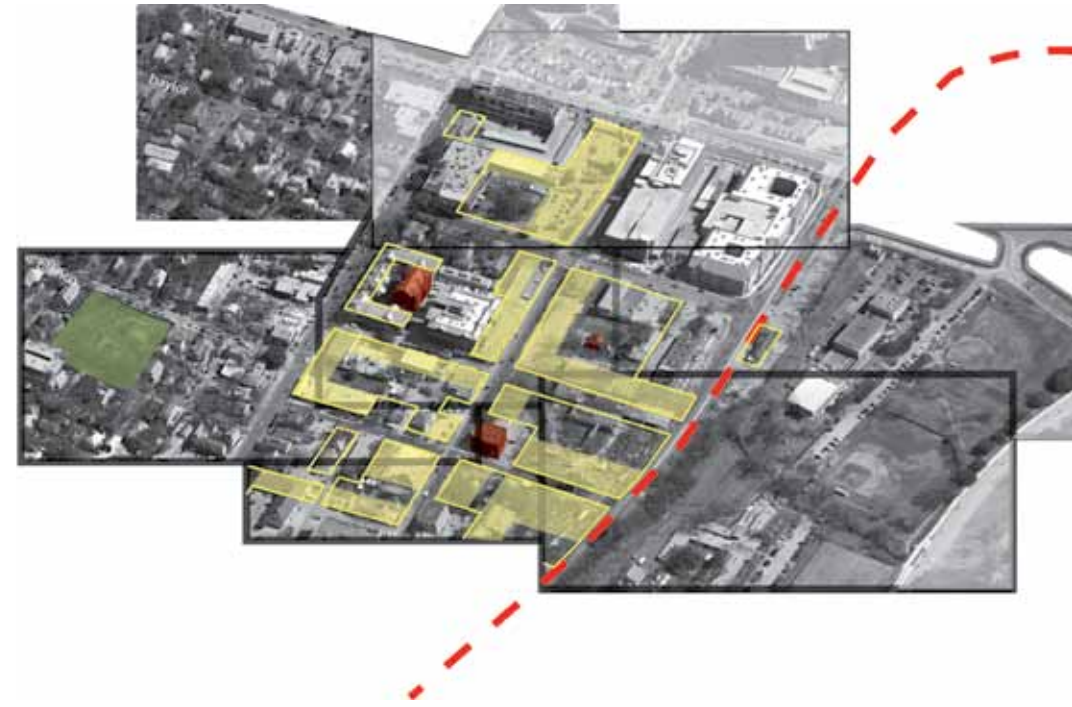
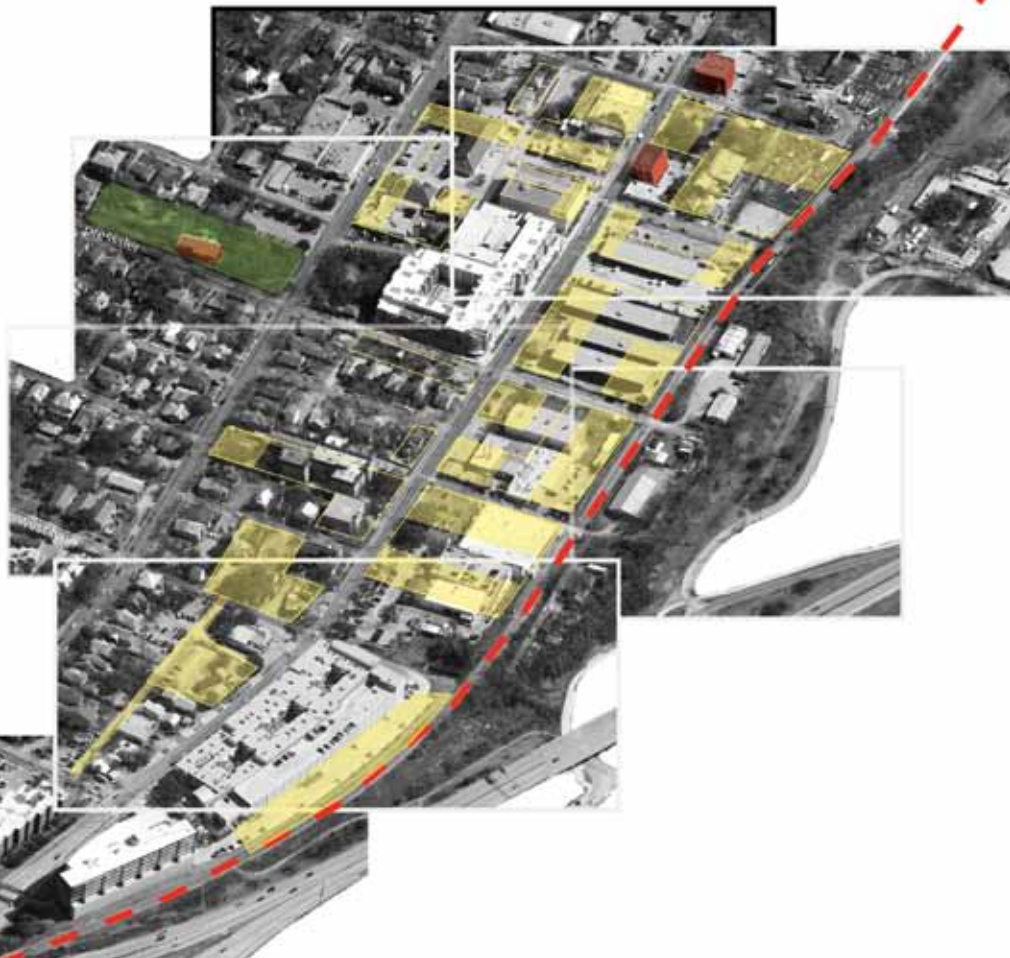
Boston, MA 52.9 units/acre



Portland, OR 42.7 units/acre

source: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2007

Proposed Development Sites



Identifying the district's buildable land parcels is a critical strategy in the West End Framework Plan. Existing land uses and zoning regulations overlaid on the district encourage a very high percentage of surface parking and large amounts of underused land. Our proposed block structure is intended to work together with a new set of volumetric regulations and land uses that would reduce underused land, so that new, more responsible, forms of density and programs can begin to occupy the district over time. Our target density is for thirty-three units per acre, coincident with the city of Austin's target for mixed-use corridors and of a scale that would support the future urban rail initiative while balancing future development with the best aspects of local character. This density will increase the district's residential population and bring new opportunities for housing and commercial space that, balanced with retail and restaurants, would create places of interest, activate the public atmosphere of the neighborhood and provide new social relevancy for the area.



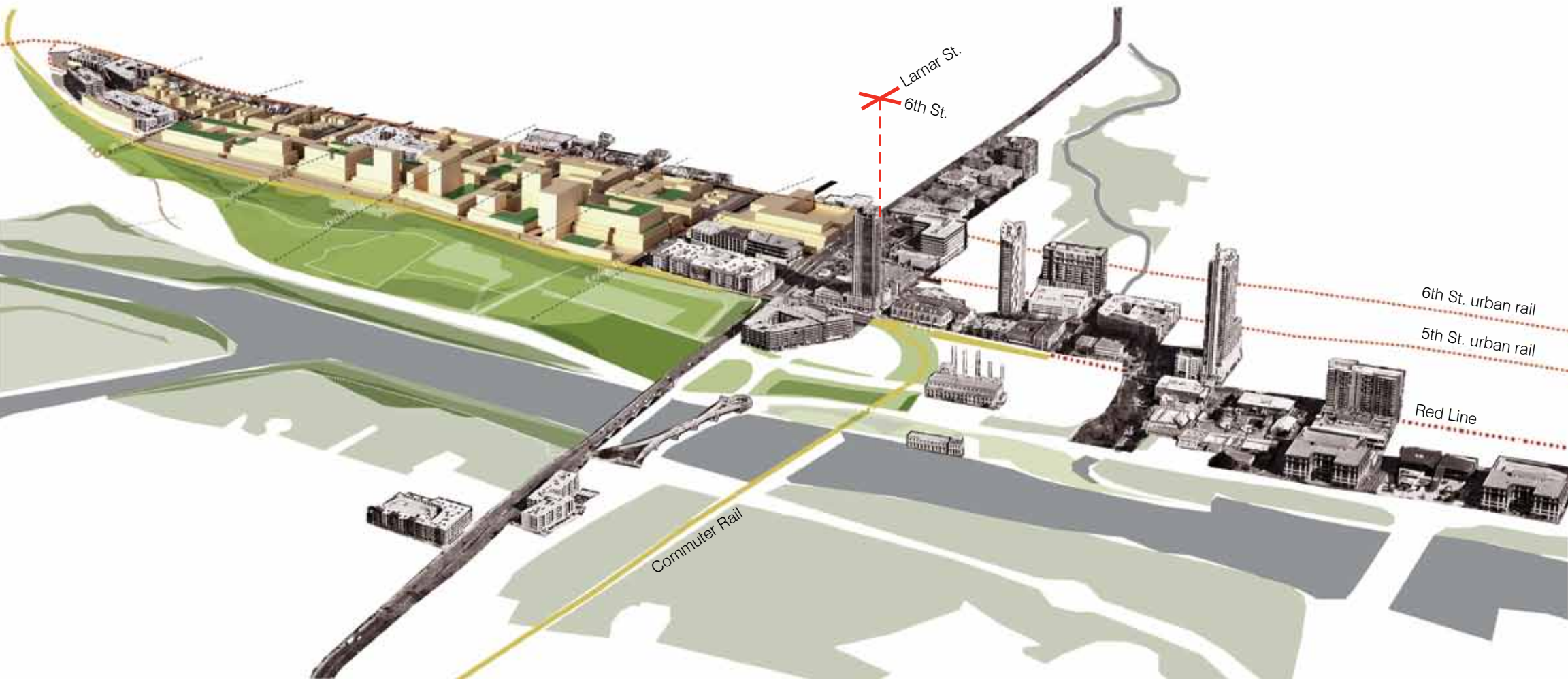
Context-Sensitive Infill



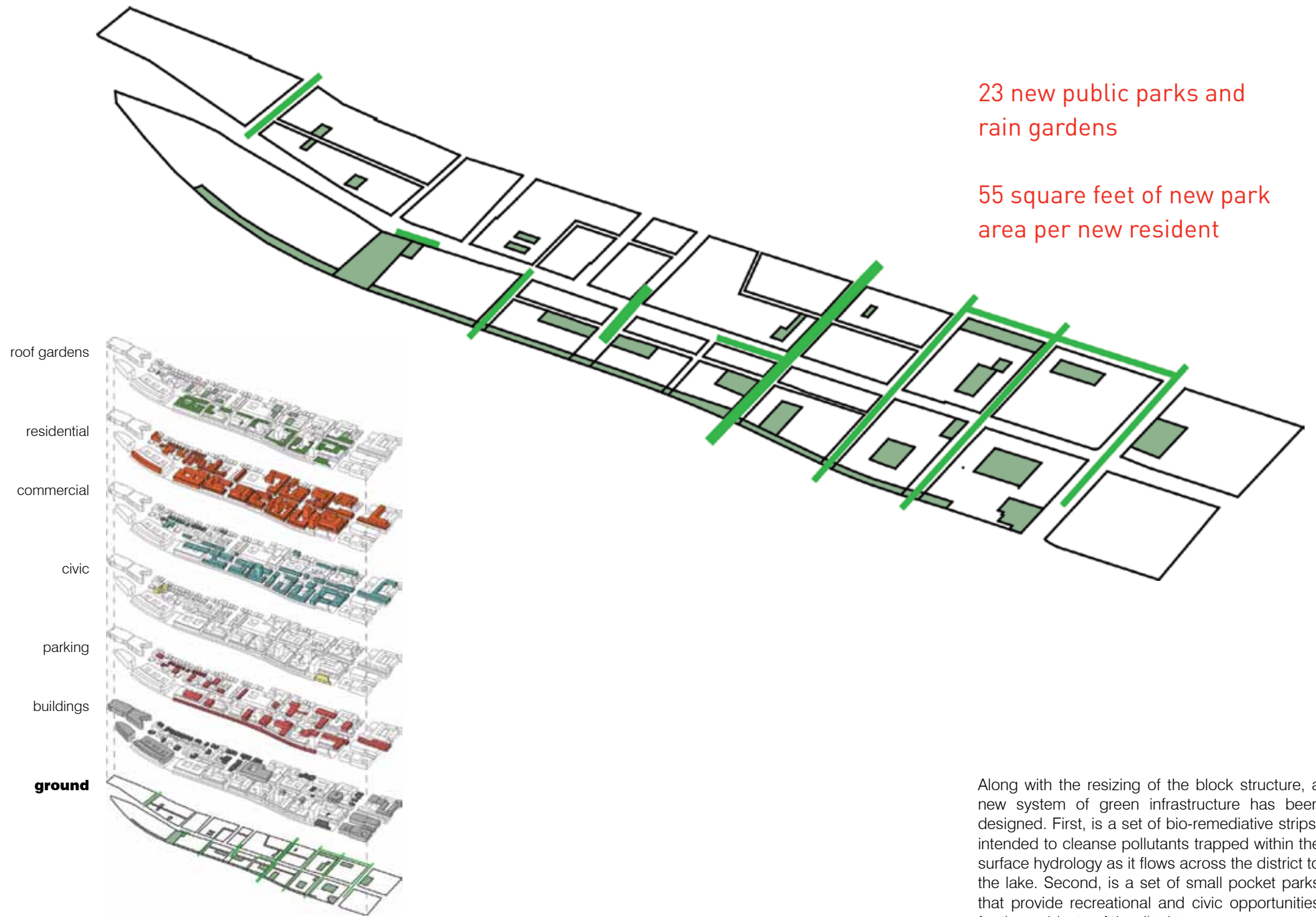
This diagram illustrates an example of the development potential within one of the more vulnerable urban blocks common to the western end of the district. Due to the complexity of the overlapping regulations within this building climate, the illustration of new development within our scenario is executed surgically, with new architectural potential inserted into the existing context in a way that attempts to balance competing forces.

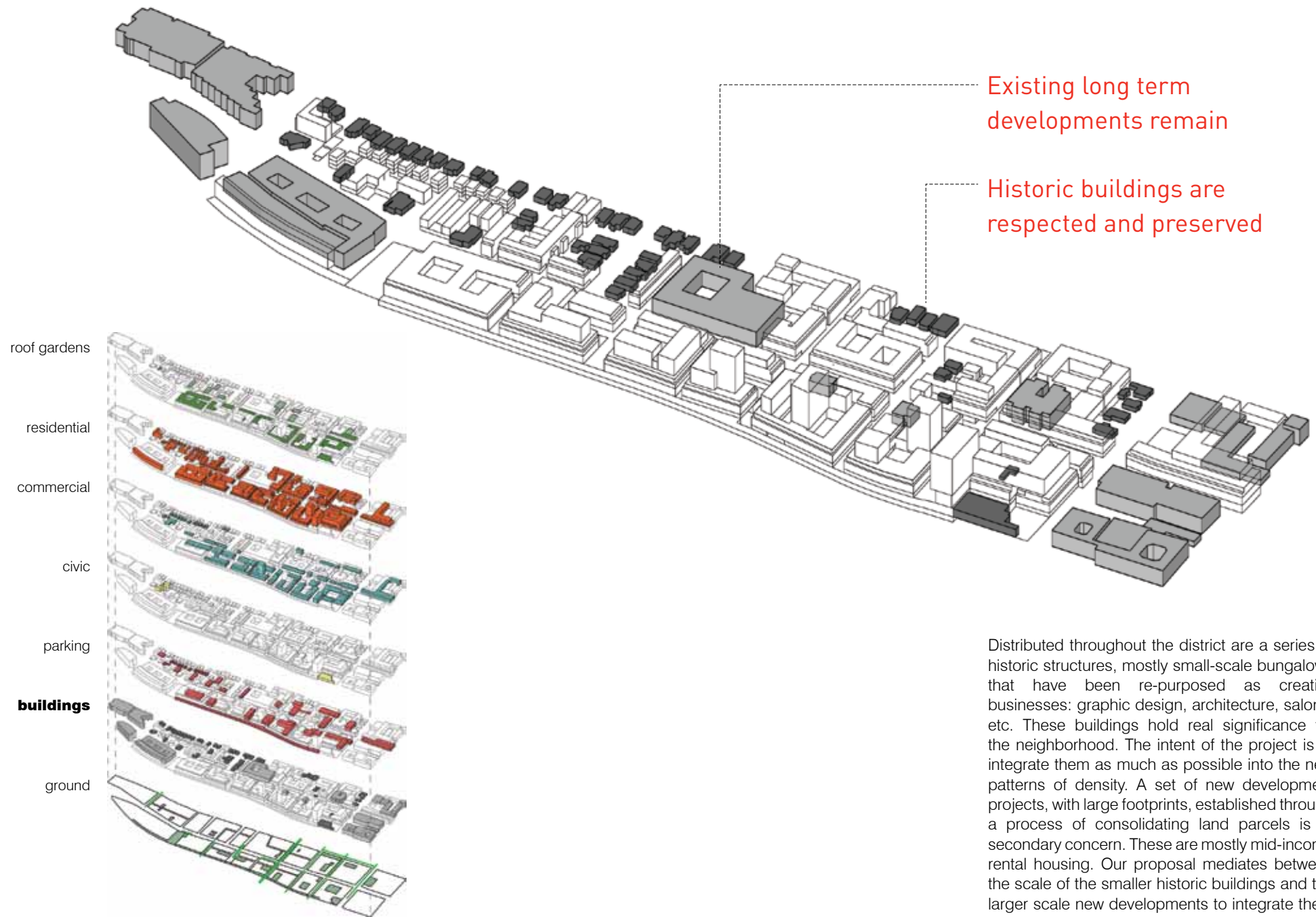


Park Edge Development

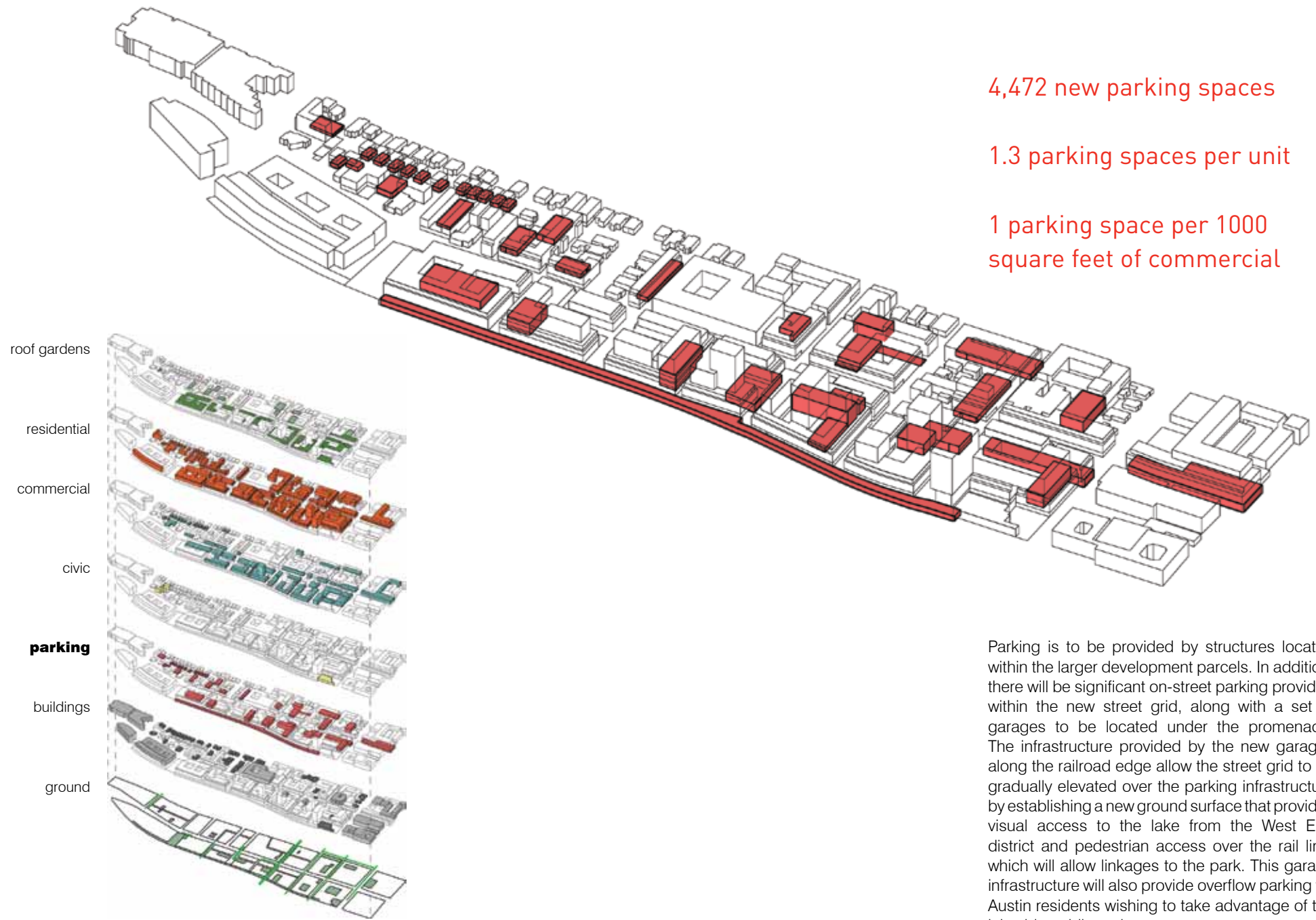


Integrated Development Strategy





Distributed throughout the district are a series of historic structures, mostly small-scale bungalows that have been re-purposed as creative businesses: graphic design, architecture, salons, etc. These buildings hold real significance for the neighborhood. The intent of the project is to integrate them as much as possible into the new patterns of density. A set of new development projects, with large footprints, established through a process of consolidating land parcels is of secondary concern. These are mostly mid-income rental housing. Our proposal mediates between the scale of the smaller historic buildings and the larger scale new developments to integrate them into a seamless urban fabric.



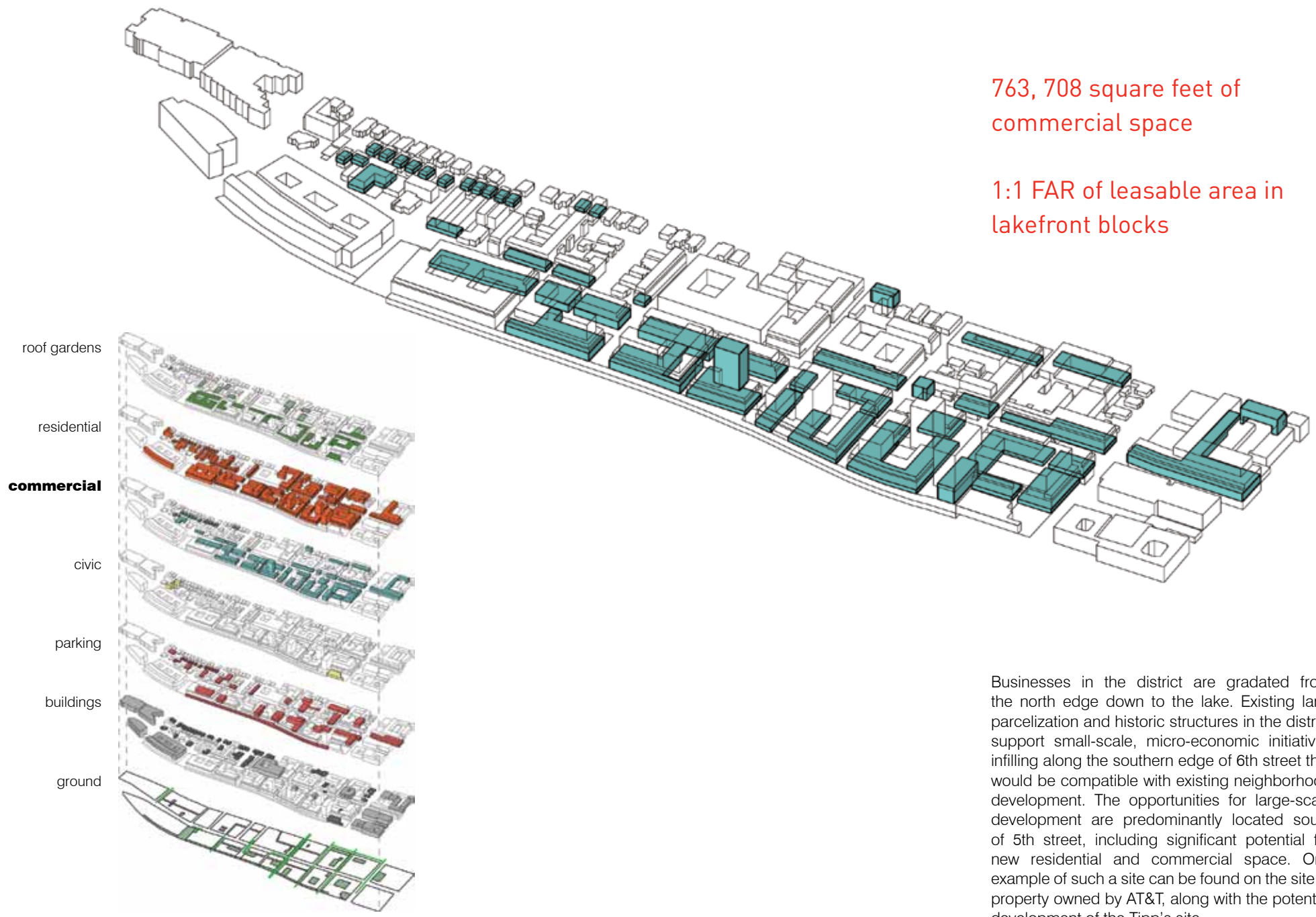


Community Market

Neighborhood Center

28,450 square feet of new public facilities

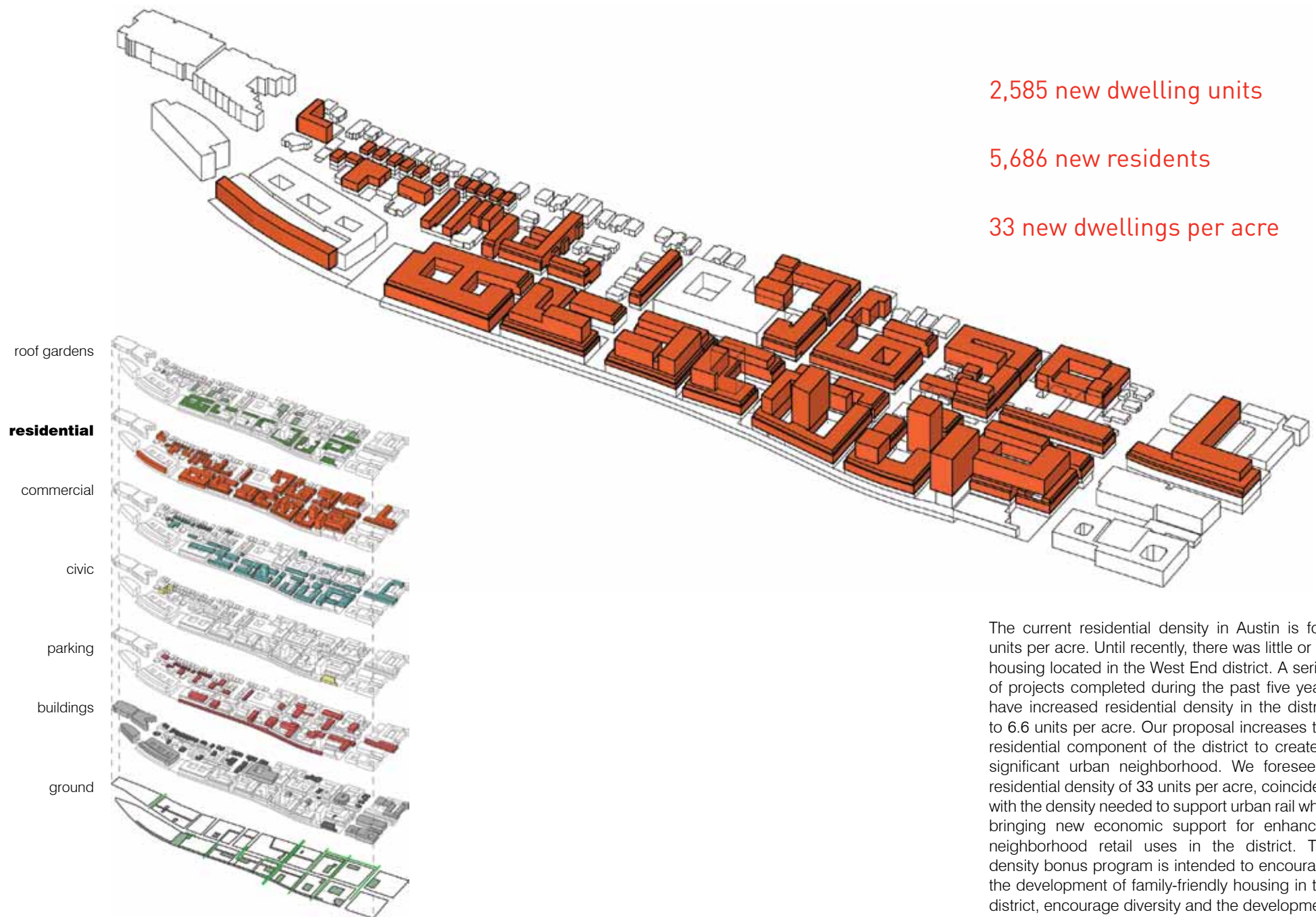
One of the most significant structures in the area is the historic building that exists on the former Tipp's steel site. Our proposal adaptively reuses the building for community and civic functions in the form of a marketplace, such as one might find at Eastern Market in Washington DC, or in other cities such as Seattle or Boston. This would bring a significant public program to the edge facing the park and establish an amenity for the local community and for the residents of greater Austin.



763, 708 square feet of commercial space

1:1 FAR of leasable area in lakefront blocks

Businesses in the district are graded from the north edge down to the lake. Existing land parcelization and historic structures in the district support small-scale, micro-economic initiatives infilling along the southern edge of 6th street that would be compatible with existing neighborhood development. The opportunities for large-scale development are predominantly located south of 5th street, including significant potential for new residential and commercial space. One example of such a site can be found on the site of property owned by AT&T, along with the potential development of the Tipp's site.



2,585 new dwelling units

5,686 new residents

33 new dwellings per acre

The current residential density in Austin is four units per acre. Until recently, there was little or no housing located in the West End district. A series of projects completed during the past five years have increased residential density in the district to 6.6 units per acre. Our proposal increases the residential component of the district to create a significant urban neighborhood. We foresee a residential density of 33 units per acre, coincident with the density needed to support urban rail while bringing new economic support for enhanced neighborhood retail uses in the district. The density bonus program is intended to encourage the development of family-friendly housing in the district, encourage diversity and the development of a stable neighborhood community.



267,385 square feet of roof gardens

207,501 square feet of semi-public space

Along with green infrastructure improvements enhancing the public realm, we propose a set of density bonuses provided to the developers of new construction in exchange for the provision of green building strategies, including green roofs, public pocket parks and playgrounds. The amenities built to receive these bonuses will help this neighborhood become a model of sustainable building practices within the city.

DE | Examples





Maximum Buildout Scenario



West End Urban Edge

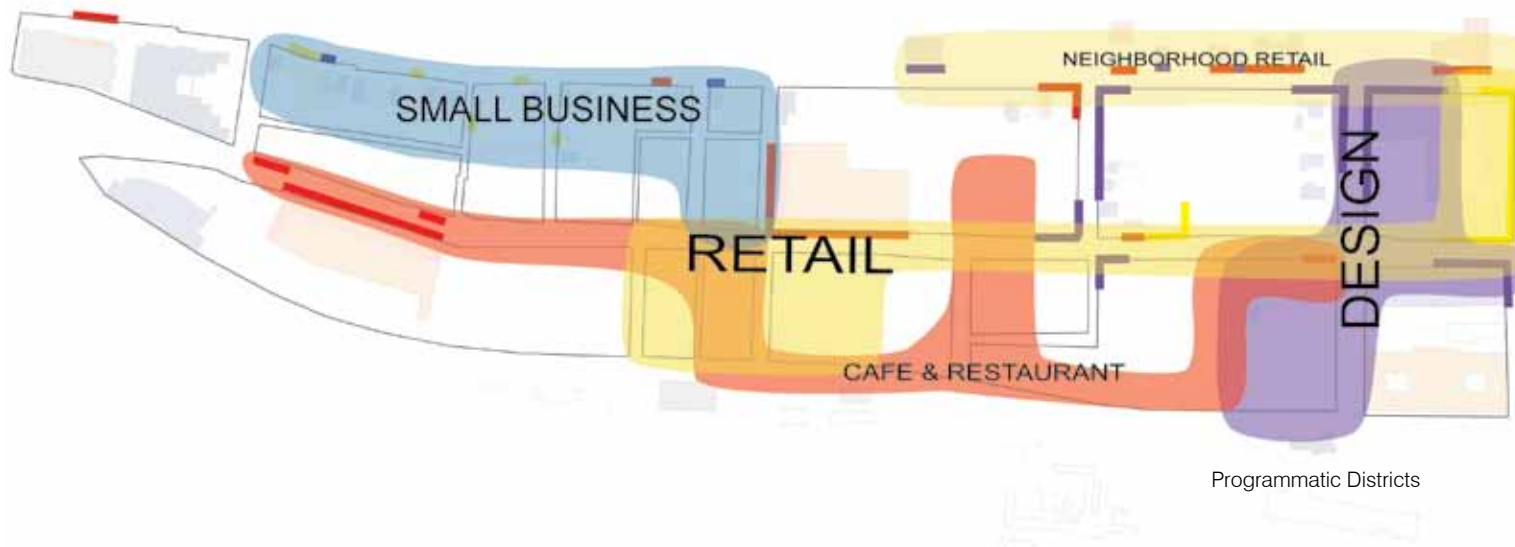
DE | Density

5

Catalyze the economic potential of the district by providing opportunities for local micro-economic ventures, together with macro-economic investment.



Existing Local Programs



Programmatic Districts



Along the north side of 6th street, a significant neighborhood retail edge, occupied by Swedish Hill Bakery and Amy's Ice Cream among others, has already begun to develop. Together with this burgeoning area, there are a series of new businesses aligned with the design industry: antique stores, interior design boutiques, etc., that have become established in the area. This project intends to enhance and extend the programs that have already blossomed in the area by drawing them through the district in order to encourage more locally meaningful and place-oriented businesses. In this way, the framework enriches the characteristics that have already begun to establish an identity for the district, one that is more economically resilient and based on local strengths.



Suggested Programmatic Expansion

- | | | | |
|----------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| Restaurant | ■ | Art & Antiques | ■ |
| Coffee and Ice Cream | ■ | Furniture | ■ |
| Bar | ■ | Housewares | ■ |
| Grocery | ■ | Flower and Gift | ■ |
| | | Printing and Signage | ■ |
| Book/Record/Video | ■ | Clothing | ■ |
| Sporting Goods | ■ | Salon | ■ |
| Bike | ■ | Pets | ■ |
| Musical Instruments | ■ | Tattoo and Piercing | ■ |

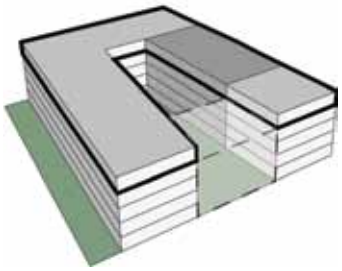


6th Street: potential public realm

DE | Density

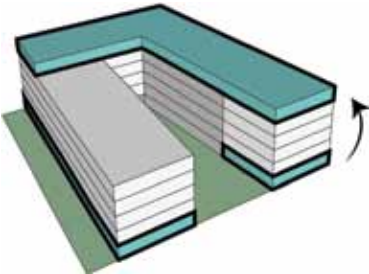
6

Incentivize the provision of neighborhood benefits through the creation of a density bonus program or TIF district.



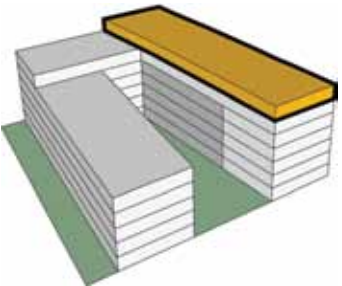
Semi Public Space

Open the courtyard to the city, space lost may be placed on top. Courtyard must be one publicly accessible space.



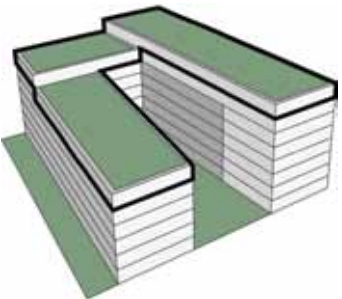
Affordable Housing

Ground floor retail will be exempt of FAR calculations if the same amount of square footage of affordable housing is provided.



Family-Friendly Housing

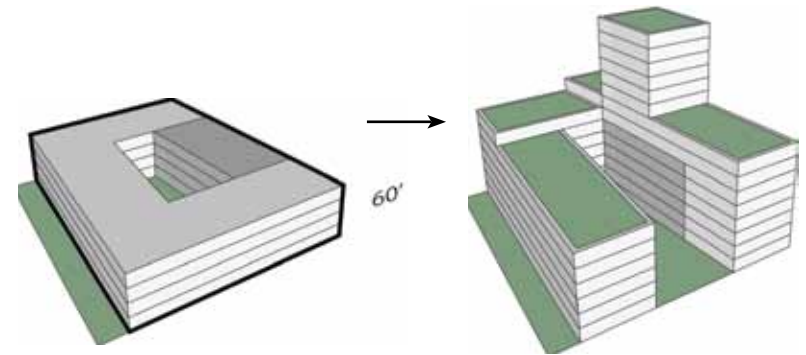
For every unit that has more than two rooms, an extra 150 square feet of floor area will be awarded.



Green Roofs

For every square foot of green roofs, the same amount of area will be awarded and not required to be counted in the FAR.

Negotiated Benefits



New West End Model

We propose to use density bonuses in the West End and along the south central district of the Lady Bird Lake waterfront in much the same way that the City of Austin is currently considering them for use in other urban areas, .

This tactic is intended to incentivize development outcomes and to provide direct public benefits. From a menu of benefits that the developer can provide as part of each new project, more development rights in the form of density bonuses may be earned. Community benefits may include green infrastructure, affordable family housing, provisions for public space and parks, right-of-way connectivity with access through larger sites in order to provide connections from the neighborhood to the park. These rights are built into the volumetric coding in tiers: a developer may build in tier-one without any density bonus demands but if a developer wants to build higher with more density, brick-and-mortar benefits must be provided back to the community.

MO | Mobility

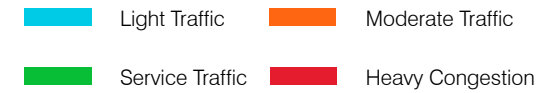
7

Create an integrated network of multi-modal streets.

MO | Examples



Auto-Dependent Infrastructure



Rush hour traffic on 6th Street poised to enter the West End district.

As a result of 20th Century planning policies, i.e. zoning, many American cities have been separated into disconnected and mono-programmatic territories. When studying the American city, one can see the effects of this separation of program: housing, workplaces, industrial zones, parks, etc. are each segregated with a lack of connectivity between them. The edges of these zones have little or no connection from one to the other, a situation that is amplified by the design of our roadways, principally engineered for quick automobile access and little else. This fragmentation and lack of connectivity is one of the principle problems of the American city and it negatively affects how it works as a spatial and social construct. Solving this problem is one of the most important activities of urban design today, and is central to the issue of sustainability. Designers seek to bind the city together through the integration of programs, spatial proximity, multi-faceted systems of movement and social diversity.



Existing Traffic



Proposed Street Types



Existing Bike Network



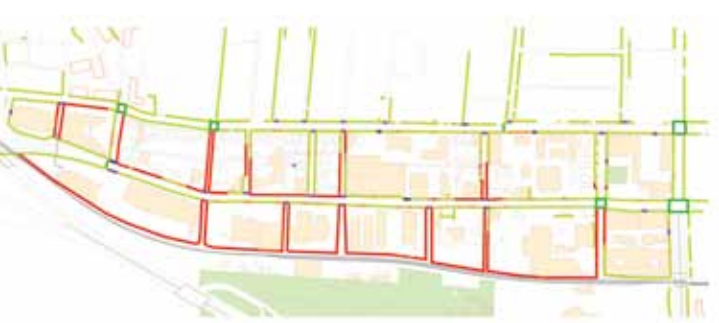
Proposed Bike Network



Existing Transit



Proposed Transit

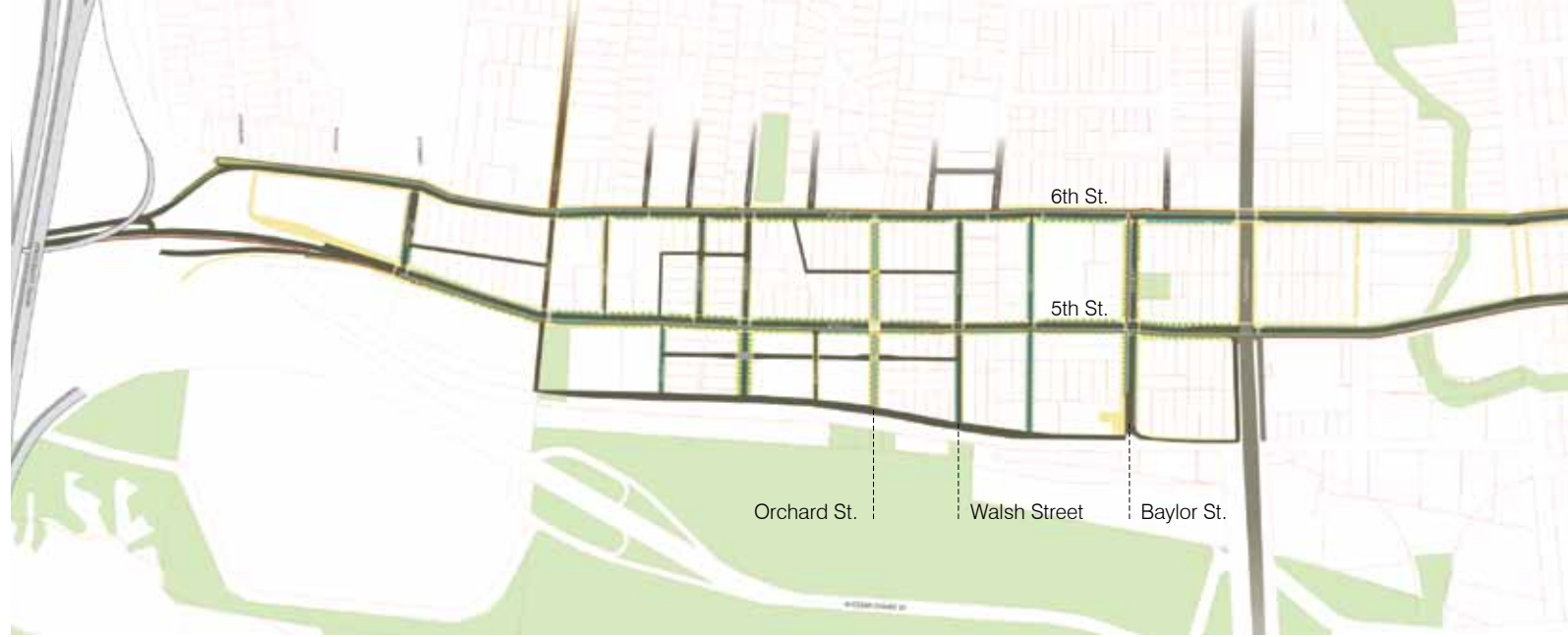


Existing Sidewalks



Proposed Sidewalks

Liveable Streets Framework

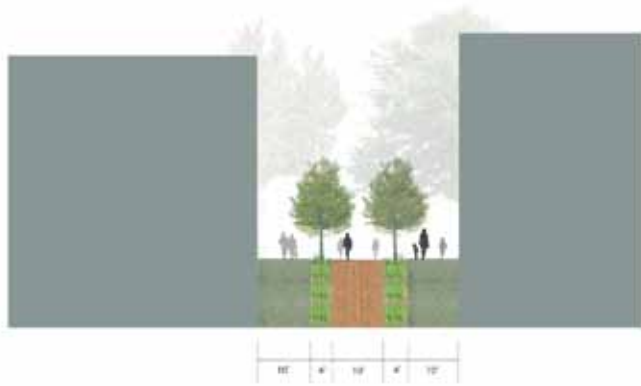


Proposed 5th and 6th Street
Traffic Mode Distribution

The establishment of of an integrated approach to city building requires density as well, a situation that is central to the idea of building for a more sustainable future, especially in high growth regions, while connectivity is fundamental to the way dense urban environments are structured.

One of the primary drivers of this project was the neighborhood's frustration with a lack of connectivity between the neighborhood and the park. The 5th and 6th street corridors have become principle commuting routes linking the highway infrastructure of the Mopac Expressway through to downtown, and the high volume of traffic moving at a rapid speed on these streets through the site; without stoplights, stop signs or other slowing mechanisms, exacerbates the problem of connectivity. The railway right-of-way and the topography change also make it very difficult to bind the neighborhood to Lady Bird Lake and the public park that surrounds it—one of the primary public spaces of the city.

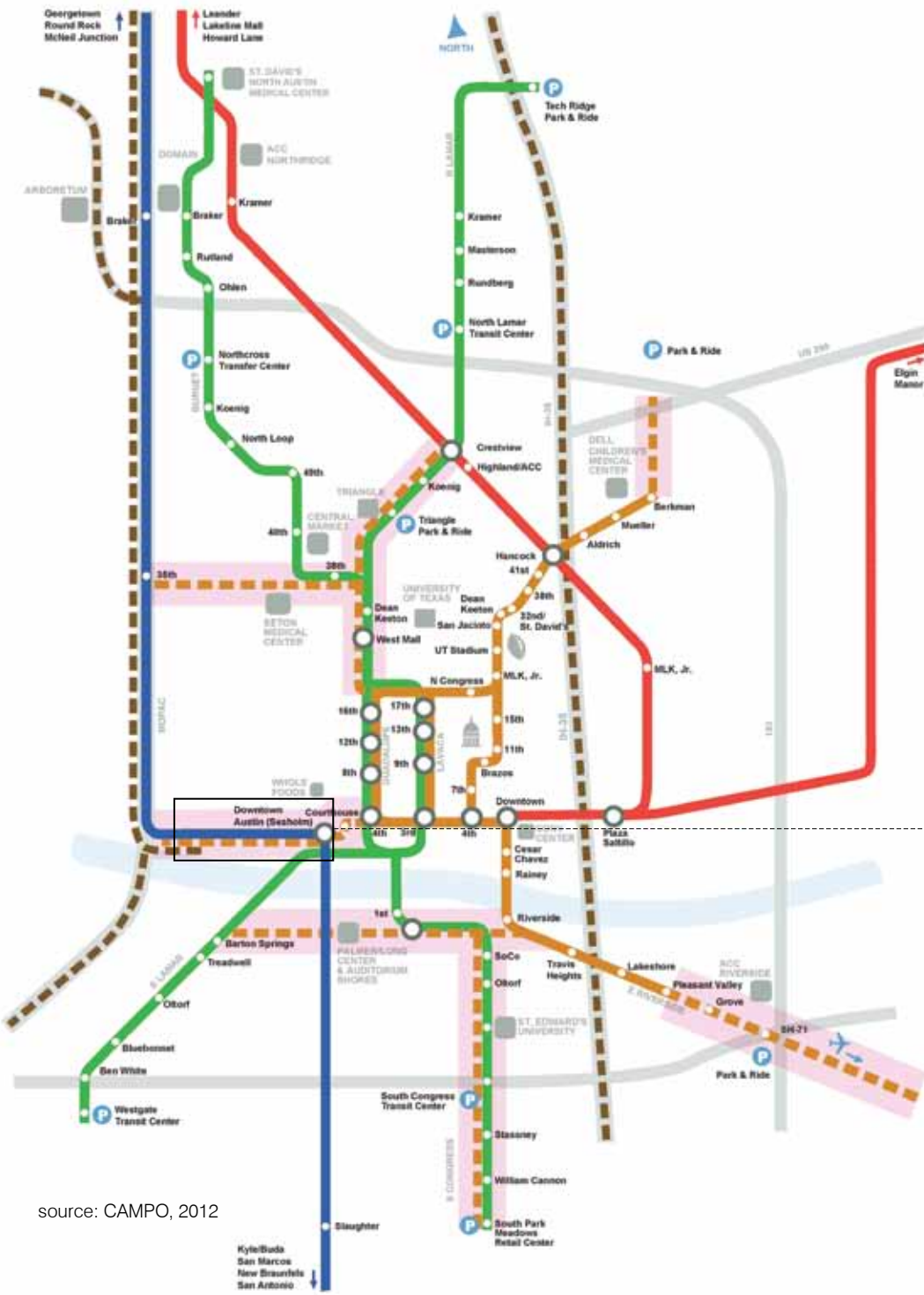
Orchard Street Passage



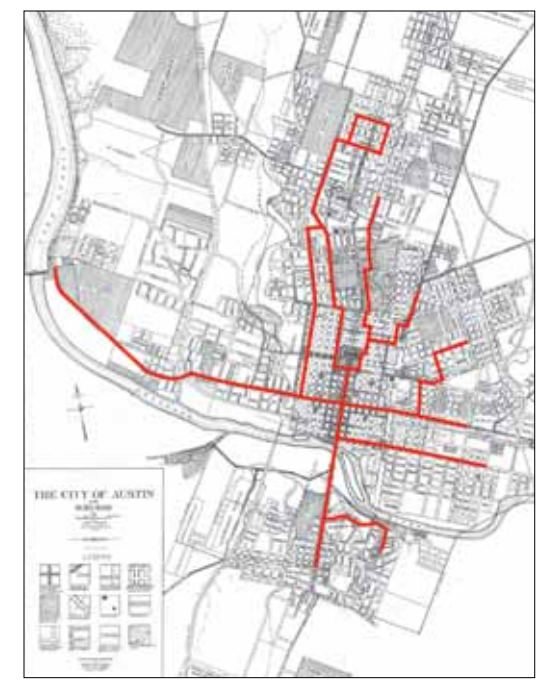
Orchard Street right-of-way: proposed

We have designed a network of livable streets, engineered to provide for multiple modes of connectivity through the district: pedestrian, bicycle, transit and automobile. Within this framework, Orchard Street serves as a primary connection between the old west side neighborhoods and the promenade along the edge of the park. The proposal for Orchard Street has a very intimate character. It allows for bicycles, pedestrians, green infrastructure and the kinds of resident and retail programs that would expand upon the strengths already present in the existing neighborhood.

Provide the necessary infrastructure to support future urban rail.



source: CAMPO, 2012



In studying the potential for transit in this area, we studied the history of the district. In the 1925 rail map of Austin, there is an urban rail line extending from downtown through the West End as far as Mansfield Dam. The location of this historic rail corridor is an opportunity to revisit the potential of urban rail infrastructure through the district once again. Indeed this is a possibility that has recently been added to the most recent transit map for the city. The provision of transit following an east-west direction would serve the new populations moving into the area, and provide an alternate mode of sustainable transit for the future, one which is less automobile dependent. The infrastructure designed for urban rail would bring confidence that the site will continue to play an important role in the future transit needs of the area and serve as a catalyst for generating private investment to match the public investment in infrastructure. This investment also brings an improved streetscape, enhancing urban quality for local residents.

East-West Connections



- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| | Urban Rail Stops in site | | Planned CMTA Redline |
| | Urban Rail Stops out of site | | Planned Lone Star Rail |
| | Transfer Locations | | Proposed Urban Rail |
| | Planned Urban Rail | | Proposed Lone Star Rail Stations |
| | Planned Urban Rail Alternative | | Bus Routes |
| | Planned CMTA MetroRapid | | |

We are proposing a vital new east-west transit connection across the city. This system would be designed to link the new critical development areas as they progress from east to west across central Austin. The new route would start with the upcoming development along the Waller Creek corridor and extend along and through the downtown, skirting by the redevelopment of Republic Square, connecting to the urban nexus surrounding the Seaholm power plant, and continuing through the 5th and 6th street corridors in the West End, finally extending out to any future development of the Brackenridge tract. This would become an important east-west linkage in the city, and one that would tie into the larger regional transportation network within central Texas. It is also a system that could grow with the city, with the initial right-of-way being established for buses and eventually transitioning to rail as the demand for ridership increases and the urban population along the corridor grows.



5th St. Multi-Modal Corridor

Create pedestrian linkages from the neighborhood through the West End to Lady Bird Lake.

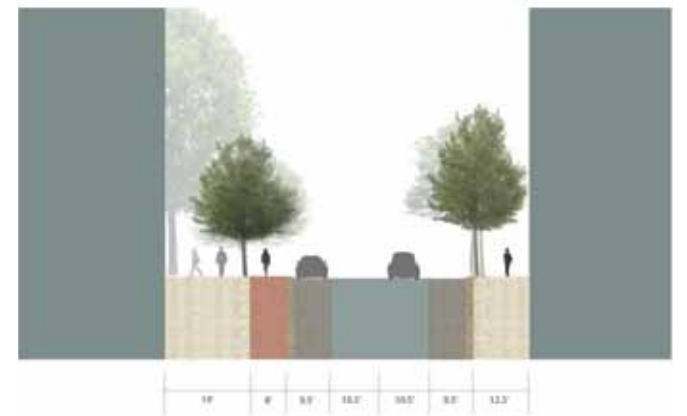
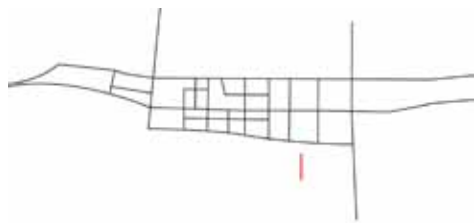
North-South Connections



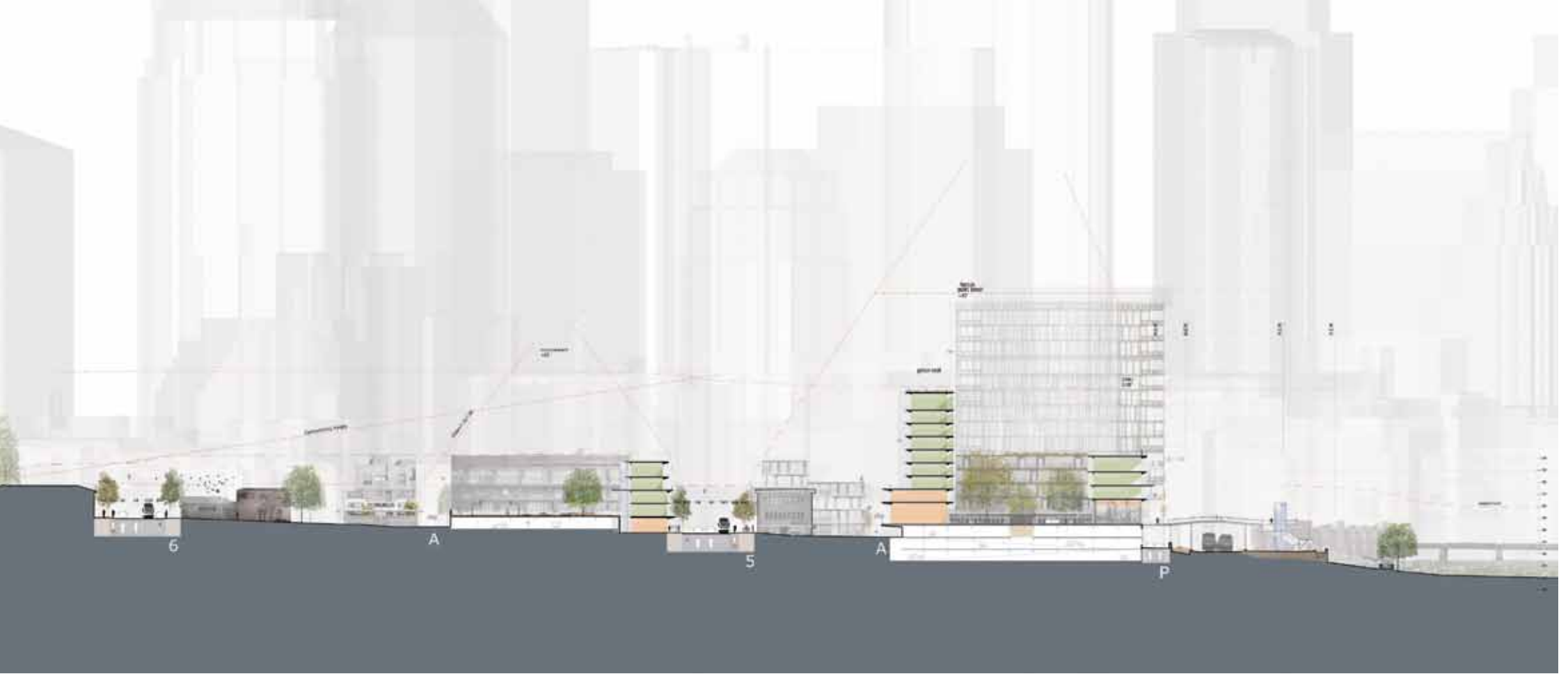
We studied the four principal connecting streets: Baylor, Orchard, Pressler, and West Lynn. Each would establish linkages across the blocks of the West End from the neighborhood to the lake. Connectivity along each one of these streets is obstructed by either the railroad right-of-way or by one of the larger parcels of underused private property. In order to facilitate the connective role of each of these streets, we reduced the block sizes of the larger parcels within the district by either establishing new rights-of-ways or by reviving the historical role of old ones that are no longer in use. The network was then improved; designed as a multi-modal system in order to create a fine-grained urban system.



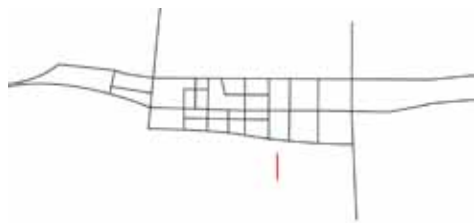
Section: Blanco - Baylor



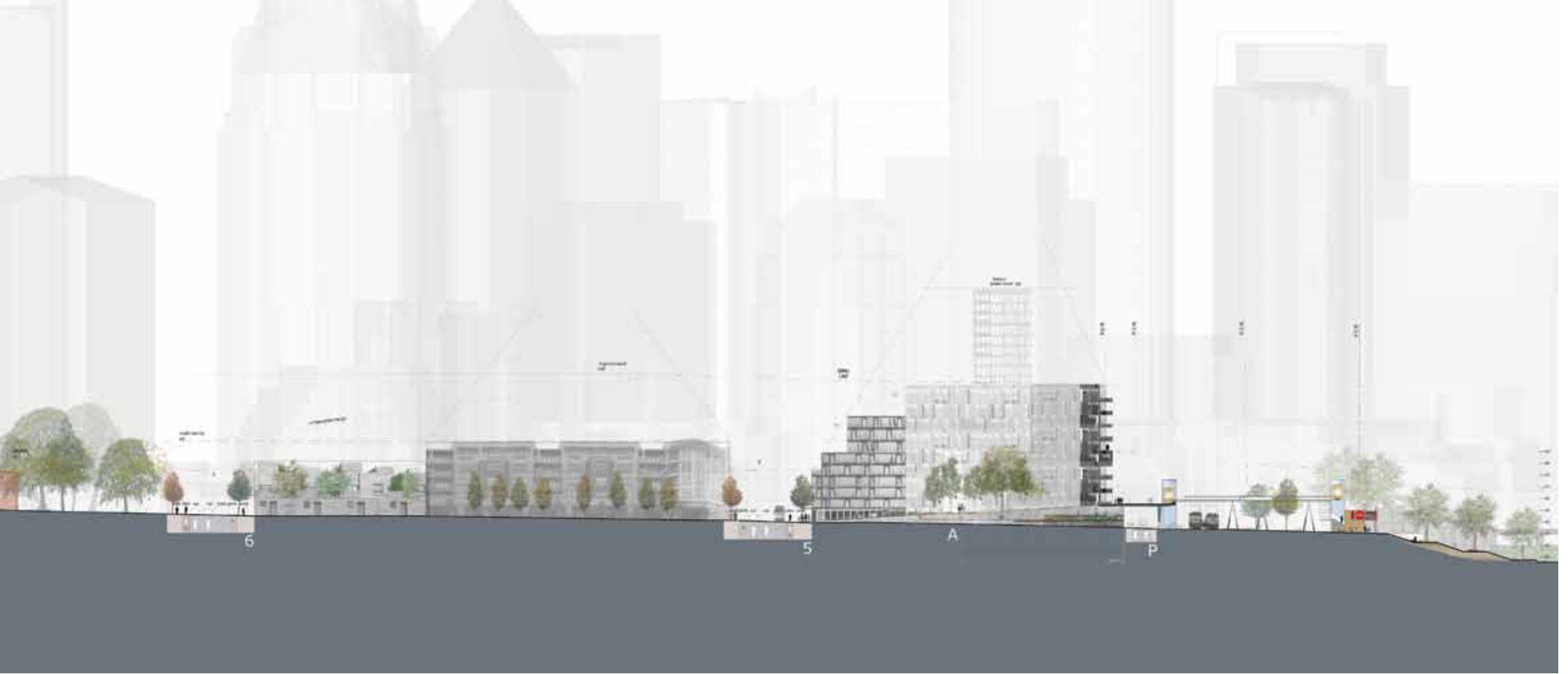
Baylor St. right of way: proposed



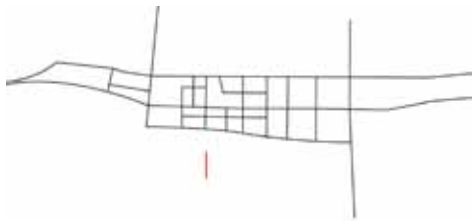
Section: Walsh - Blanco



Walsh St. right-of-way: proposed

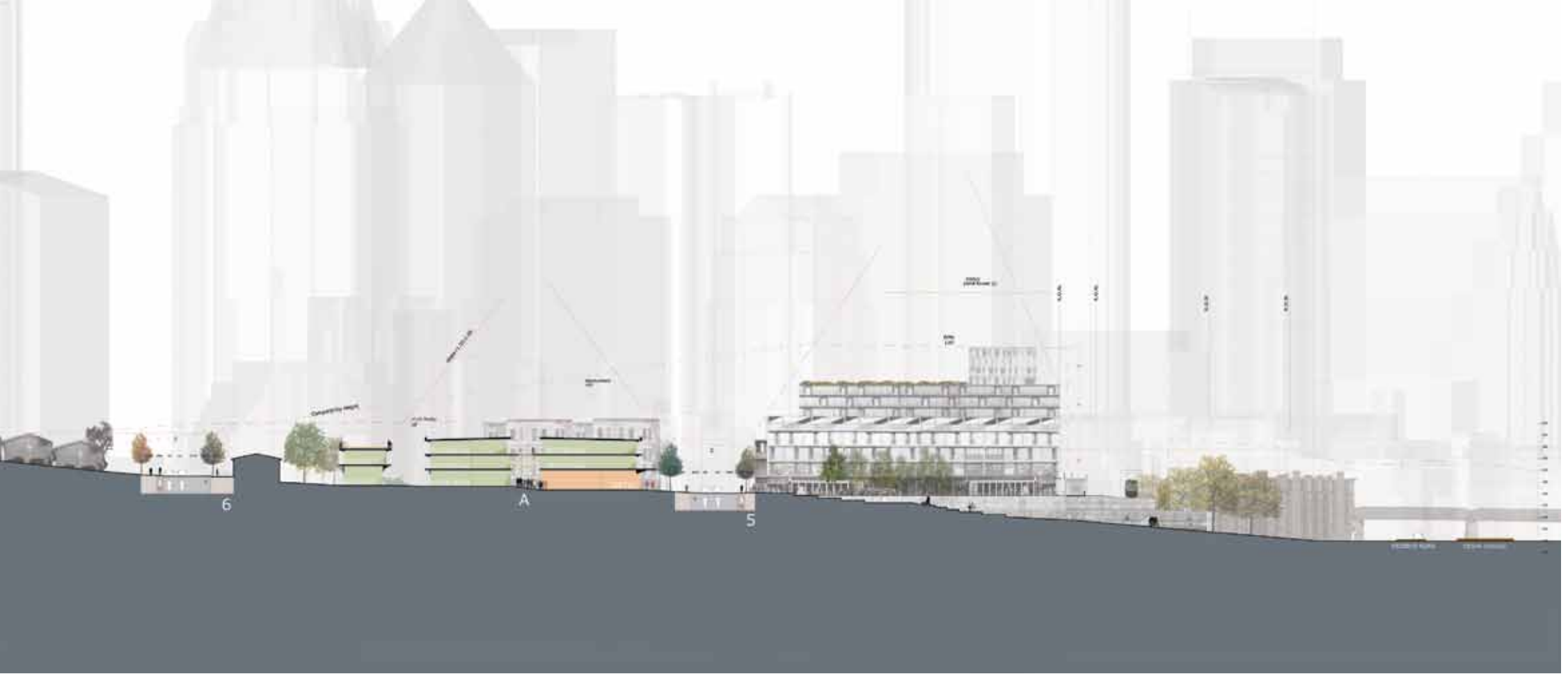


Section: Pressler

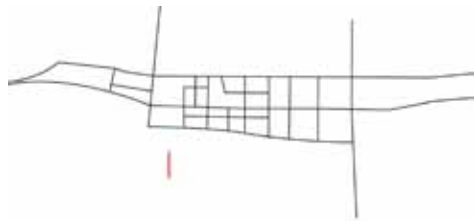




Linkage to Lady Bird Lake park at Pressler St.



Section: West Lynn - Powell





Linkage to Lady Bird Lake park at West Lynn St.

LA | Landscape

10

Develop a network of places that cater to both local residents and the community at large.

LA | Examples



Open Space Network



As the city of Austin grows in population and becomes denser, the important role of open space becomes more critical in maintaining and amplifying the quality of life that drew many of us to central Texas. We are proposing the establishment of an integrated open-space network designed to create a series of significant public spaces distributed throughout the district. These spaces cater to both local residents and residents of the community at large. Urban spaces should be designed to perform multiple functions including: places for social gathering, recreational space for children, cafes, and pocket parks, etc. Ultimately, it is this network that will bind the neighborhood together, link the neighborhood to the park, and create a unique urban character for the district.



Adaptive reuse of historic Tipp's building into an urban marketplace.

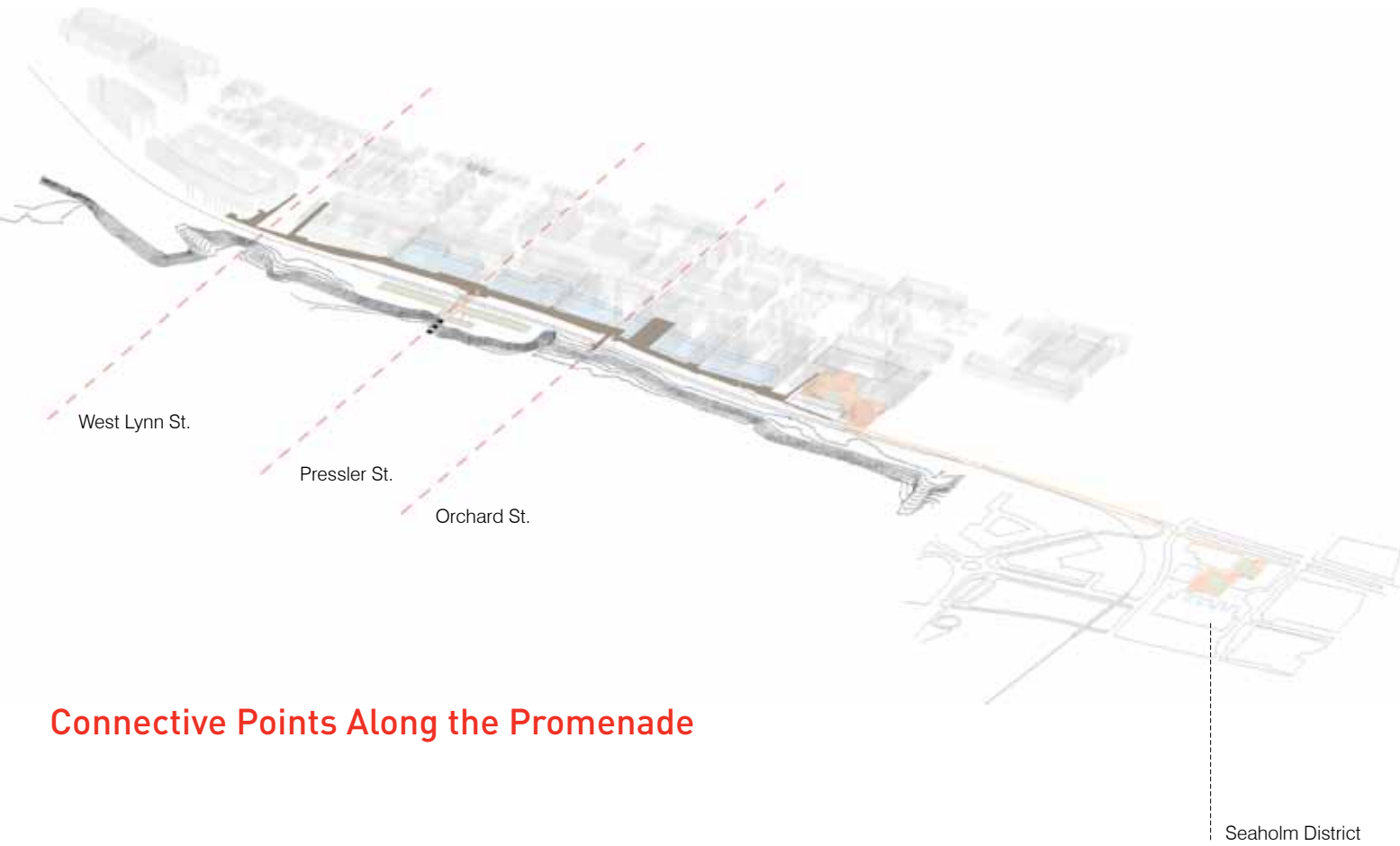


New public space, made desirable to build by the incentives of the density bonus program and located between 5th St. and the rail corridor brings urban life to the former post-industrial district.

Create an urban porch for the West End to provide a social hub for the district with visual connections to Lady Bird Lake.

LA | Examples



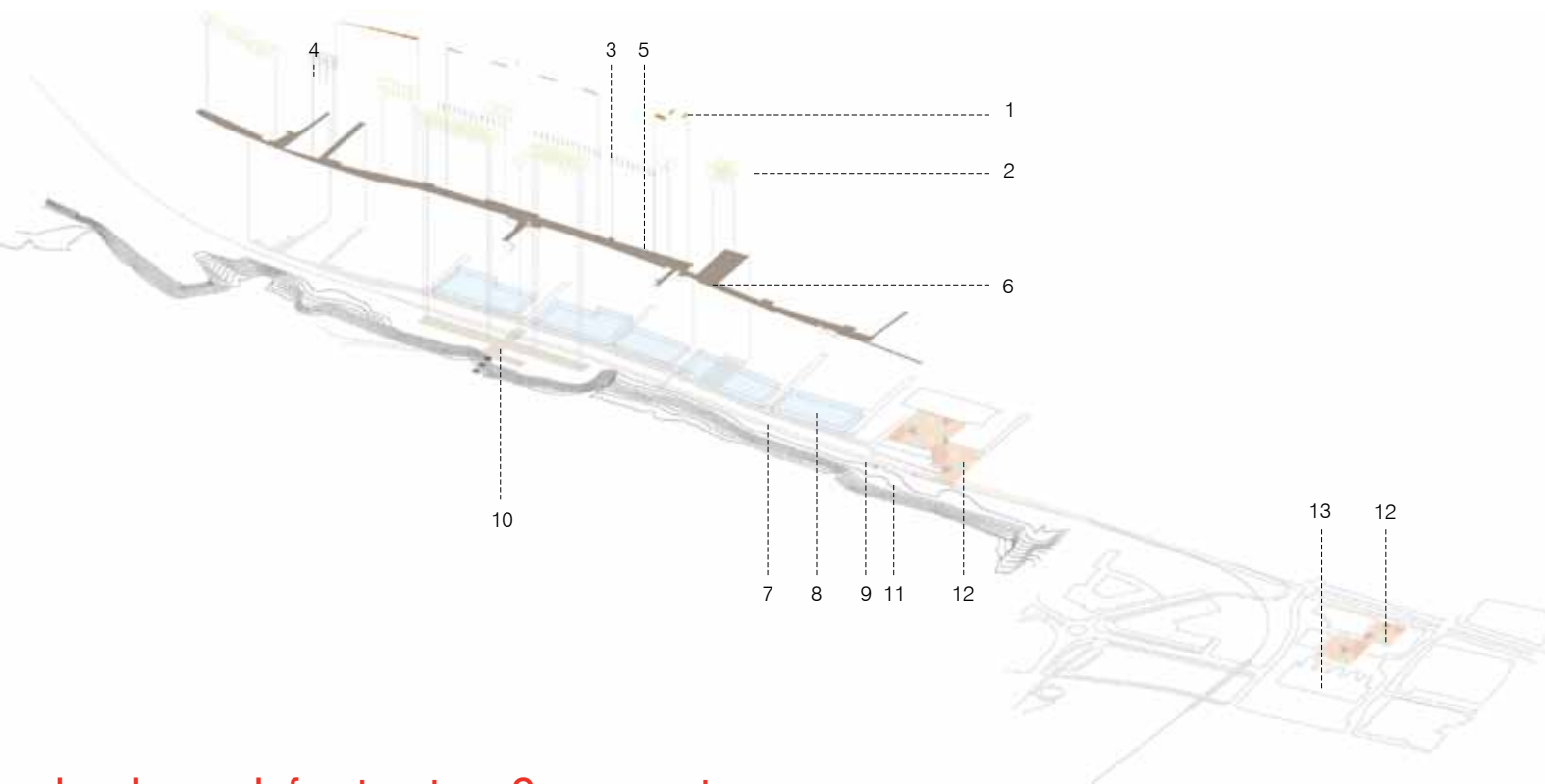


Connective Points Along the Promenade



The most significant development opportunities within the district are the larger land parcels in the post-industrial area between the 5th street corridor and the edge of the park. The park edge along the top of the bluff is the most significant public space for the neighborhood with the potential to be a true front porch for the district tying together the Seaholm district with connections from the neighborhood and the park.

The substantial grade change that exists between 5th St. and the railroad right-of-way works to the advantage of new development. We propose that growth along this edge be designed in such a way as to use new lower-level parking structures to provide a base for any new development projects. One very successful model for this type of approach can be found at Atlantic Station in Atlanta, pictured above. There, parking garage structure is used to provide a flat ground place that accommodates building development and public space. This allows for connectivity between the neighborhood



Landscape Infrastructure Components

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Planters and benches | 8 Parking |
| 2 Street trees | 9 Amtrak/Union pacific |
| 3 Pole lights | 10 "The Bluff" |
| 4 Vertical wind turbines | 11 Geographical edge of the site |
| 5 In-ground lights | 12 Public event space |
| 6 Promenade | 13 Seaholm power plant |
| 7 Access road below promenade | |

and the edge of the park and minimizes the visual and physical impact of the parking structures, thereby establishing a more qualitative urban environment.

A secondary benefit of this strategy for the West End is the provision of an elevated promenade along the park edge - a public space for the neighborhood along the Mopac right-of-way. This would be a significant platform for the public realm with expansive views and the possibility for public access across the railroad tracks at a legally permissible height. The gradual slope up from 5th street reduces the psychological impact of the barrier. This approach was used at the Moll de la Fusta in Barcelona, picture above, which reconnected the city of Barcelona to its harbor across an area that was once twelve lanes of roadway and train tracks. It created a set of public spaces designed to minimize the impact of the barrier. Much like the proposed West End promenade, it establishes significant and meaningful social places along the edge.



The West End's Front Porch

The new West End pedestrian promenade, financed through public-private partnerships, would create a seamless and meaningful connection between the city and the edge of the park on Lady Bird Lake, connecting the district into the adjoining initiatives currently underway in the city, extending the urban linkage beginning at the new Waller Creek District and connecting along the 2nd street corridor, across the new second street bridge, through the Seaholm district, and along the bluff facing the lake.



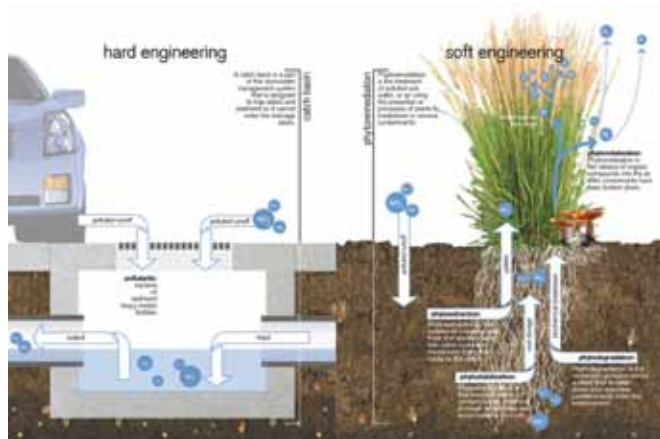
Aerial view of Pressler St. crossing 5th St. and the new urban plaza before connecting to the Promenade and providing access across the railroad right-of-way to Lady Bird Lake park.



The new West End urban skyline along the Promenade edge overlooking the park.

Use green infrastructure strategies to mitigate pollutant runoff into the watershed of Lady Bird Lake and address long-term water conservation.

Surface Hydrology



source: University of Arkansas Community Design Center

One important aspect of the West End development framework strategy is the design of a strategy for mitigating surface pollutants contained in the water flow across the district. A study of the topography and the existing hydrology that currently flows from the Clarksville neighborhood across the West End district and into the park shows that much of this water is contaminated by pollutants coming from former post-industrial sites, along with that generated by automobile traffic from the 5th and 6th street corridors.

Green Infrastructure



Portland: 12th Avenue Green Street Project

We are proposing a network of sustainable green infrastructure, comprised of bio-remediative elements including bioswale strips on major north-south streets. These would be used to organically clean surface run-off of pollutants before the sheet flow enters the flood plain of the lake. This strategy would reduce the use of hard wastewater infrastructure. In addition we propose implementing a green roof and water recycling and catchment incentive to be included as part of the density bonus program. As Austin continues to suffer from the effects of climate change, sustainable water conservation strategies must be considered an important aspect of new development and infrastructure improvements.



West End Framework Plan

Acknowledgements

This book has been made possible with funding provided through The Center for Sustainable Development at the School of Architecture, and the Office of the Provost of The University of Texas at Austin.

The TUFLab® also thanks the members of the 5th and 6th Street Vision Committee: Larry Halford, Joe Loiacono, Perry Lorenz, Laura Porcaro, Jorge Rousselin, Mike Sullivan and John Teinert for their commitment, involvement and support of the project.

The Lab would also like to thank the students from the School of Architecture who produced the work featured in this publication.

Published by The University of Texas at Austin, Center for Sustainable Development and The Texas Urban Futures Laboratory, August 2012.

Design: Jeffrey Blocksidge
Printing: 360 Press

Bibliography

"Downtown Density Bonus Program and Downtown Affordable Housing Strategy," City of Austin, accessed September 21, 2011,

http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/downloads/dap_council_presentation_7-23-09.pdf.

"Old West Austin Neighborhood Plan," Old West Austin Neighborhood Association and City of Austin, accessed September 21, 2011,

http://www.owana.org/public/documents/OWA_Neighborhood_Plan.pdf

Steiner, Fritz. "Reinventing the Texas Triangle: Solutions for Growing Challenges," accessed September 21, 2011,

<http://soa.utexas.edu/files/csd/ReinventingTexasTriangle.pdf>

"Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan," City of Austin, accessed July 12, 2012,

<http://www.imagineaustin.net/>

"Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidebook," City of Austin, accessed June 9, 2012,

http://www.community-wealth.org/_pdfs/tools/tod/tool-city-of-austin-guidebook.pdf



Texas Urban Futures Lab

The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture

The TUFLab[®] specializes in the simulation of future development scenarios with an agenda toward urban sustainability. Each year the faculty and students undertake an applied urban design research project in conjunction with stakeholders, professionals and city officials to envision the latent potential for urban areas.

As an applied research arm of the Graduate Program in Urban Design, the TUFLab[®] can complement the work of local civic groups and professional design firms. Students do not attempt to produce the prescriptive documentation of a professional firm but engage in an enthusiastic catalog of ideas and images which might spark further development possibilities pursued through professional offices or city departments.

The Texas Urban Futures Laboratory operates as an applied research arm of the School of Architecture, under the Center for Sustainable Development. TUFLab[®] is funded by private donations from alumni and friends of The University of Texas at Austin, along with the generous support of organizations and individuals within the state of Texas. Funds are used to support students by providing travel, supplies and assistantships for their work with various Texas communities.

To support the Texas Urban Futures Laboratory contact:

Luke Dunlap
Director of Development and External Relations
512.471.6114
luked@austin.utexas.edu