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Placemaking and Walkability in Austin's Capitol Complex

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by

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Abstract

Placemaking and Walkability in Austin's Capitol Complex

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Typical of many American downtowns, Austin, Texas, has experienced renewed interest in redevelopment over the past two decades. Following City policies, this redevelopment has tended to be mixed-use in nature and has included elements of placemaking and walkability. A glaring exception to recent trends is the Capitol Complex, an area north of the State Capitol building that is home to various state government office buildings. The Capitol Complex displaced a more traditional mixed-use neighborhood in the 1950s and has been plagued by disjointed planning activities ever since. Recent budgetary challenges and a shortage of office space have prompted the state government to reexamine the Capitol Complex as a target for redevelopment.

This professional report scrutinizes the Capitol Complex as a "non-place" that is challenged by walkability issues in an effort to make recommendations to ensure successful redevelopment that is more consistent with that found in the rest of downtown Austin. First, the literature on placemaking and walkability demonstrate what the Capitol Complex lacks. A case study provides a good comparison to see what policies have helped to improve districts near state office buildings. Second, the history of the Capitol

Complex provides context for how the area became what it is today. Third, a land use and walkability analysis utilizing GIS along two corridors in the Complex and a pedestrian count show that the area is unfriendly to pedestrians and lacks activity on nights and weekends. Finally, the report offers both policy and urban design recommendations to help ensure that redevelopment activities contribute to make the Capitol Complex a walkable "place."

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Introduction

Austin, the capital city of Texas, is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. The population doubles roughly every twenty years. Newcomers are drawn to the city for many reasons: the pleasant climate, laudable quality-of-life, relatively healthy employment prospects, and a lower cost of living than many other U.S. metropolitan areas. One of the municipal government's biggest challenges is effectively managing growth. In recent decades, downtown Austin has seen major redevelopment projects including new high-rise condominiums, hotels, a modern city hall, and a new federal courthouse. These projects have usually featured some sort of restructuring of the built environment: for example, streetscape and walkability improvements in order to make the area more pedestrian-friendly.

Over time, downtown properties for redevelopment have become scarce. This fact, coupled with the recent adoption of a new comprehensive plan calling for denser and more connected development, means that areas adjacent to the central business district will see an increase in property values as well as pressure to redevelop in a style similar to the rest of downtown.

The State of Texas owns a large area of land between the central business district and the University of Texas campus. This area, the "Capitol Complex," is home to the state capitol building as well as various other edifices housing the state bureaucracy. However, not all State employees in Austin work in the Complex. Many are located in leased office space scattered throughout the city. Recent budgetary pressures, as well as impending lease expirations, have led state officials to consider redeveloping some of the Capitol Complex to include both new office buildings and projects devoted to private sector use.

The Capitol Complex, apart from the majestic state capitol building, is unexciting and unsightly, and, as will be argued here, thus fails to be a "place" that is conducive to pedestrian street life (Arefi, 1999; Carr & Servon, 2008). It is a dull anomaly surrounded by the bustle of downtown Austin and the energetic University of Texas campus. Much of the land is currently used for surface parking lots and multistory parking garages. There are few 'destinations' to attract people and walking in the Complex is unpleasant due to the lack of amenities for pedestrians. The Capitol Complex contains many underutilized parcels which, if developed wisely, could bring the State additional revenue, lessen dependency on the use of leased space to house government offices, and help to create a connection between the University of Texas and downtown Austin.

This professional report first reviews the history of the Capitol Complex, including the central policy and planning interventions that have shaped its development, and then presents a streetscape analysis based on a walkability assessment and GIS analysis. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for future redevelopment of the Capitol Complex in order to help ensure that the area's potential is not wasted. Recommendations include both policy and urban design suggestions.

Chapter 1: Theory and Literature Review

This chapter will briefly describe trends in urban redevelopment since World War II in the United States. The concepts of 'place' and 'walkability' will be defined and discussed with examples from the literature. The principal components of each concept will be introduced. The concepts will then be discussed in the context of U.S. state capital cities and the bureaucratic 'campuses' that are home to state government offices. The concept of 'non-place' as applied to such areas will be explained. Despite the amount of literature on walkability, narrowing down a concrete definition is difficult due to its subjective components.

Urban economic redevelopment in the United States has undergone several stages since its inception as policy in the post World War II era of widespread suburbanization. "Slum clearance" was the first era, targeting blighted and decayed neighborhoods. Entire blocks were demolished to make room for urban freeways and other large-scale projects. Slum clearance often carried undertones of racism and classism, as areas home to racial minorities and the poor were more likely to be considered blighted (Miles, Berens, Eppli, & Weiss, 2007, p. 119). More nuanced approaches to urban economic redevelopment began emerging in the 1970s when Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs), a vehicle for transferring funds from the federal government to local authorities, became the method of redeveloping urban neighborhoods. (ibid., p. 130; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). From the 1970s to present day, CDBGs are still used, increasingly coupled with public-private partnerships.

Public-private partnerships are often headed by a quasi-governmental development corporation which receives public funds but is able to operate more similarly to a private enterprise (Miles et al., 2007, p. 333). Large-scale projects, with

their many complications and idiosyncrasies, are ideal endeavors for public-private partnerships (ibid., p. 331). The public-private partnership has been recognized as effective, although there is potential for abuse or conflicts of interest (ibid., pp. 350-351). Projects may not move as speedily as they would under totally private-sector supervision due to the number of stakeholders and government agencies involved.

The purpose of urban economic redevelopment through development corporations is often to attract a specific sort of business or project, such as a sports stadium/arena, a large employment center, or public infrastructure, such as a park. Changes to the built environment usually come about simultaneously with new construction, and not in anticipation of future development. However, public authorities can implement certain strategies, such as streetscape improvements and creation of a tax-increment financing (TIF) district, in order to make an area more attractive to potential future investors. Private citizens can also petition the municipal government to organize a business improvement district to provide enhanced levels of service to a specific area in order to attract businesses and customers (Hyra, 2008, p. 47; Warner et al., 2002).

Early "slum clearance" projects were intended to "clean up" blight and decay (real and purported) and imposed an idea of physical and aesthetic order upon wide swaths of increasingly-empty central city neighborhoods. More recent economic redevelopment projects, however, have instead focused on "dead" zones of cities. These zones contain blocks or neighborhoods that have fallen into disuse over the years, but which are rife with potential for activity and investment. These areas might have an inordinate supply of vacant buildings, lack diversity of business activity, and be utilized simply as a transit route between more interesting areas of the city. They may lie dormant for decades, silently decaying away in the shadows of more active surrounding areas. The East Market Street corridor in Louisville, Kentucky, and 14th Street NW in Washington,

DC, are examples of areas that have been active sites of reinvestment over the past decade. East Market Street is located between downtown Louisville and the popular Highlands neighborhood, but its blocks of disused warehouses and barren streets kept cars speeding past to find diversion elsewhere ("History," n.d.). Fourteenth Street NW in Washington, DC was home to several open-air drug markets and street prostitution as late as the 1990s, and its boarded up commercial buildings and historic rowhouses were a stark contrast to the activity ten blocks to the south on the National Mall, and six blocks to the west at Dupont Circle (Abrams, 2012). Both neighborhoods are now on the upswing and home to vibrant commercial establishments, full-time residents, and a bustling street environment, thanks to concentrated economic development initiatives.

'Place' and 'placemaking'

The concept of 'place' is an important feature of the urban environment and should not be overlooked as a vital component of urban economic development. There are multiple and subjective meanings of 'place.' Approaches to conceptualizing and understanding what is meant by 'place' in the literature center on the emotional, psychological, and physical experience of an environment. Scale is one way of defining a 'place.' A 'place' can describe something as large as a nation or a region, or as small as a neighborhood (Arefi, 1999, p. 180). Other descriptions of 'place' focus on subjective elements and meanings; for example, Miles et al link 'place' with a "strong sense of identity and community" (2007, p. 558). Lynch (1960) refers to a 'place' as an environment where meanings and associations are clustered and organized. Such a place enhances human activity and encourages memory development. Hayden (1997), as cited in Carr & Servon (2008), writes that 'place' is difficult to pinpoint as it dodges conventional definitions. From an anthropomorphic standpoint, we can identify a place

from its personality: characteristics that we assign to it based on our observations and emotional states arising from being there. Carr & Servon (2008) also cite Jackson, who mentions the "well-being" we feel by being in a place and the desire we have to return repeatedly (1994, p. 158). Similarly, Logan and Molotch state that "places are not simply *affected* by the institutional maneuvers surrounding them. Places *are* those machinations" (2007, p. 43). Place, therefore, is defined equally if not more so by its social construct as by where it is physically located.

Gieryn gives a definition that is based more in the physical environment: place is defined by its uniqueness amongst all other places, its physicality, and its inseparability from ordinary human activity (2000, pp. 464–465). Thus, from Gieryn's perspective, there is an important human element of a place as well as a requirement for authenticity. Considering this, Walt Disney World would not be considered a place by Gieryn because humans do not live there or go about realizing quotidian activities there. This leads to important questions: can place be fabricated, or is it something that arises naturally? By whose power or influence are places created?

Carr and Servon posit that a locale's inhabitants and businesses create 'place:' they label this as "vernacular culture" (2008, p. 30). Examples of places with a strong vernacular culture possess features such as public markets, historic sites, and arts and cultural centers, which constitute "unique, locally rooted characteristics of [a place] that can attract investment" (ibid., p. 30), and hence serve an important role in furthering an area's economic wellbeing. Such characteristics also stabilize neighborhoods, serving as a sort of foundation upon which a vernacular culture can be crafted. People in a locale will have differing experiences of place, depending on their role. Arefi states that some places are seen only as locales where economic transactions occur (1999, p. 180).This might be true of a public market, which according to Carr and Servon is a type of place

that inherently possesses an element of vernacular culture. For the shopper or tourist, the market serves as a destination. For others, the market is a place of employment or business. However, the market might very well define the area surrounding it; for example, the Pike Place Market in Seattle. A salmon thrown by one fishmonger to another is a sign that some business transaction is occurring, yet to the passerby this sight is part of the culture that makes the market (and the surrounding area) a 'place.'

One important question for this report is whether or not 'place' is something that can be deliberately constructed, or if it is only something that naturally emerges over time. The concept of 'placemaking' attempts to describe the necessary characteristics and variables needed to either foster development of a 'place' or to outright manufacture it from the ground up. Definitions of 'placemaking' vary, but are premised on developing a certain level of activities and amenities which in turn will lead to more positive perceptions of the built environment. Bain, Gray, and Rodgers simply define placemaking as "making spaces where people want to spend their time" (2012, p. 2). Al-Kodmany (2011), citing Nasar (1998) and Fleming (2007), states that placemaking refers to the creation of built environments that impart a distinct sense of place of an area while meeting basic physiological and psychological needs of people.

Attempts at placemaking can drastically alter the previously existing "vernacular culture" of an area. Hagerman (2007) documents deliberate placemaking in Portland, Oregon, through displacement and commoditization of former industrial land uses in order to redevelop a neighborhood as a dense mixed-use area. He criticizes the displacement of marginalized citizens and lambasts deliberate attempts by redevelopers to create a new sense of place through carefully chosen, palatable elements of the old while simultaneously disposing of other less savory vestiges of an industrial past. Redevelopment seen as catering to the "creative class" of society (highly educated

professionals working in technology, the arts, design, and similar sectors; see Florida (2002)) is criticized by some as bland and inauthentic, ironically stifling or displacing elements of place that served to stimulate emotion, energy, and vibrancy in the first place (Hagerman, 2007; Long, 2009).

Principles of placemaking can be utilized to convert 'non-places' into 'places.' According to Arefi, non-places "lack the features that typically characterize place; i.e. diversity, surprise, ambiguity, [and] livability" (1999, p. 188). He prescribes thoughtful urban design as a remedy to ameliorate the doldrums of the 'non-place.' Particularly, land uses across the city must be connected through design and planning in order to avoid a metropolis composed of disjointed isolates. Planning and urban development over the past few decades, heavily focused on automobiles and getting people into and out of districts instead of circulation within them, has only exacerbated the number of 'non-places' plaguing every city. Similar to Carr and Servon's vernacular culture concept, Arefi highlights the importance of social interaction and personal communication in 'places.' A 'non-place' will almost certainly be one that is homogenous, lacking in spontaneity, and transient by nature (1999, p. 188)

Because of the significant role of perception, memory, and emotional attachment for encouraging human activity, placemaking is an important strategy used for turning neglected or nondescript zones in the urban core, such as districts with heavy office use, into memorable places. Because of the concentration of a single dominant building use, the lack of 24-hour activity, and the lessened need for cultural diversions, office districts are often failures at placemaking as defined above. In cities where mass transit is not heavily utilized, pedestrian traffic through the zone may be rare as most employees will travel to and from work in private cars. What few property uses that exist apart from offices may only cater to employees during the workweek; e.g. delis open only at

lunchtime or drycleaners. There is little to attract outsiders, or to encourage workers to spend any time before or after work in the zone. However, by drawing on principles of placemaking, redevelopment of such "dead" office districts can stimulate investment and interest, which, in turn, may attract new businesses, residents, and activities. Neighborhood revitalization can be fostered through improvements to the physical environment (Guy & Henneberry, 2004, p. 217). These improvements may include: diversity in efficient transportation options; pedestrian-oriented/walkable infrastructure; 'destinations' (recreational/cultural offerings); and a mix of successful offices and homes (Miles et al., 2007, p. 558).

Institutions can share in the role of place redevelopment (Guy & Henneberry, 2004). They are usually one out of many stakeholders, and will work collaboratively on a project. For example, businesses or a civic organization may partner with municipal government to redevelop a particular street or neighborhood. Such projects must contend with a diversity of opinions and ideas regarding the redevelopment. The end result is a compromise between the interests of all stakeholders. On the other hand, in certain instances one institution can control all aspects of redevelopment. For example, if the institution owns all of the affected land and there is little pushback from neighbors, there is no need for collaboration or consultation. The result might be something that serves the needs of the owner, but does little for the broader community. In these instances, communities must be very careful to ensure that redevelopment does not take place in a vacuum, disregarding the preferences or needs of those around it.

Walkability as a component of placemaking

In placemaking projects, 'walkability' is a key component. Walkability can enhance the experience of visitors to a place, making it more memorable and attractive.

The definition of 'walkability' varies but is generally premised upon an environment conducive to pedestrian activity. Litman defines walkability as "the quality of walking conditions, including factors such as the existence of walking facilities and the degree of walking safety, comfort, and convenience" (2003, p. 3). Forsyth & Southworth characterize a walkable place as one where destinations are close, physical barriers are non-existent, pedestrians feel safe from crime and motorized traffic, and the physical infrastructure supports walking (2008, p. 2).

One pedestrian's preferences may differ from those of another, which hinders a concrete, one-size-fits-all definition of 'walkability'. Everyone at some point is a pedestrian. After all, reaching most destinations requires some final stage form of mobility independent of cars, buses, or bicycles. (Note that individuals with impaired mobility, such as people in wheelchairs, are pedestrians, too. They have their own needs for a 'walkable' environment; e.g. ramps, adequately wide sidewalks, etc.) Thus, one challenge to defining an area as 'walkable' or not is the fact that it is impossible to know the preferences of every pedestrian traversing the area.

The London Planning Advisory Committee has broadly outlined five pedestrian needs, called 'the 5 Cs.' Specific features that make a place walkable will fit into one or more of the five categories: convenience; connectivity; conviviality; coherence; and conspicuity (Reid, 2008, p. 106). Similarly, Badland et al (2010) categorized walkable places using a formula which considered land use mix, residential density, street connectivity, and ratio between retail square footage and parking lot area. Their study was focused on determining whether or not living in a walkable neighborhood translated into a more physically-active lifestyle and was therefore not particularly concerned with walkability as an objective of urban design.

Ewing and Handy (2009) attempt to objectively "measure the unmeasureable" subjective qualities of the walkability and the pedestrian realm. In a study, videos filmed from a pedestrian's point of view were shown to a panel of urban design experts. Each was asked to rate each streetscape based on: imageability; enclosure; human scale; transparency; complexity; legibility; linkage; and coherence. An imageable place is one able to impart a distinctive mental picture on a pedestrian. Components of imageability include: number of people; number of historic buildings; presence of outdoor dining; number of buildings that depart from the rectangular, block-hugging norm; and presence of plazas, parks, and courtyards, among others. Enclosure refers to the concept of the built environment creating a space within which the outdoors are contained and confined. Street trees and buildings of similar heights can create 'walls' of outdoor spaces, while "vacant lots, parking lots, driveways, and other uses […] are all considered dead spaces" (2009, p. 74). A 'human-scaled' environment is one in which built features are suitably proportioned to humans traveling at walking speed. Examples include: street furniture; ground-floor windows; appropriate building height (i.e. nothing looming over the sidewalk straight up without setbacks); and long sight lines (ibid., p. 77). The transparency category includes elements which allow the pedestrian to gauge activity beyond the sidewalk. Windows along the street allow for glimpses inside buildings. A variety of active uses keeps the street environment lively and observable (ibid., p. 78). Complexity refers to the "visual richness of a place" and is exemplified in a diversity of styles and appearances in surroundings. Elements include a wide spectrum of colors, textures, styles, ages, and activities spread out over the day/night (ibid., p. 80). These categories of elements of walkability and their components partially inform the analysis in Chapter 3 of this report.

A checklist produced by the Partnership for a Walkable America (n.d.) provides a framework for scoring a neighborhood's walkability. The pedestrian answers questions addressing the provision and quality of sidewalks, street crossings, and perceptions of the built environment, among other topics. Streetscape remodeling complements walkability. Public art, benches, lighting, and ornamentation all contribute to the pedestrian's experience of place (Fleming, 2007, p. 290). Arefi (1999) denounces car-oriented planning as a death knell for the viability of the street-level, personal connections needed to create a sense of 'place.' A walkable neighborhood is thus one in which social interaction is fostered, thereby inspiring a vernacular culture (J. H. Carr & Servon, 2008).

'Walkability' is difficult to precisely define in terms of theory, and equally difficult to define based upon observed physical features. Tangible objects associated with walkable areas are easy enough to quantify. Other aspects of a walkable environment may be qualitative and thus not lend themselves naturally to a quantitative analysis. The fact that each pedestrian will have his or her own needs or opinions as to what constitutes a walkable place further complicates analysis (Reid, 2008, p. 106). An elderly female may feel that a rowdy, bar-lined street is unsafe at night for the very same reasons that a group of young people feel drawn to the space for its provision of destination. Thus, any comprehensive analysis of walkability should include a definition of how walkability is defined for the purposes of the study.

Relevant to this report is a study by Pivo and Fisher examining the financial premium of walkability on property values. They define 'walkability' as "the degree to which an area within walking distance of a property encourages walking trips from the property to other destinations" (2011, p. 186). 'Walkable places' are "streets and districts with physical attributes that encourage walking for functional and recreational purposes" (ibid., p. 186). The study acknowledges the nebulous concept of walkability. In order to

determine if an area is walkable or not, the authors suggest examining a broad array of characteristics. Some are similar to those considered by Badland et al (2010), such as density, mix of land uses, and street connectivity. Others are more directly observable and include block size, sidewalk width, and traffic volume (Pivo & Fisher, 2011, p. 186). The study places emphasis on the concept of destination as an important factor in walkability. In an urban setting, the ability to quickly reach destinations by walking commands a premium. Walking may be the most time-efficient method of getting around in very densely-populated environments. Thus, "the presence of desired destinations within [1 square mile] may be the most important [attribute of walkability]" (ibid., p. 187). The study, which analyzed 4,200 properties, concludes that industrial property values do not increase with walkability. However, office and retail properties can command a premium of up to 54% if they are located in walkable areas, and apartments can command 6% more (ibid., p. 203). Moreover, the study found lower cap rates on walkable retail and apartment projects. Investors seemed more willing to funnel money into projects that are walkable. This finding is particularly salient for this report, which is focused on a large amount of property, the disposal or leasing of which the landlord wishes to turn a profit.

A website, Walkscore.com, conveniently spares the internet user from navigating the nebulous theoretical expositions on walkability and boils it all down to a convenient number. One simply types an address into a search box and soon a 'score' ranging from 0-100 appears on the screen. This score corresponds to the walkability of the address, with 0 being the least walkable (or car-dependent) and 100 being "walker's paradise" (L. J. Carr, Dunsiger, & Marcus, 2010). The score is the result of an algorithm which pulls data from Google® and compares distances from thirteen types of destinations, such as restaurants, gyms, parks, and libraries, to the address entered into the search box (ibid., p.

460). The more destinations that are near to the address, the higher the score will be. Proponents of the website cite its ease of use and minimal cost (there is no charge to view a score; only access to the internet is needed.) One study found that Walk Score was indeed a valid estimator for a given address's access to walkable amenities (L. J. Carr, Dunsiger, & Marcus, 2011). Pivo & Fisher used properties' Walk Scores as the variable for walkability in their study of property values. They considered Austin, Texas, to be amongst the least-walkable cities (2011, p. 210).

Despite Pivo & Fisher's label, according to Walkscore.com, Austin ranks as the 31st most walkable large American city (Walk Score, n.d.). The average neighborhood walkability score is 47 out of 100, which, despite the ranking, makes Austin "car dependent." The downtown area has the highest score in the city, 89/100. (The Capitol Complex' score will be discussed in later chapters.) Although Carr et al (2011) found Walk Score to be a valid indicator of access to walkable amenities, Walk Score does not assess the physical built environment for pedestrians. Instead, places with low scores are those deemed to be too distant from amenities. It is quite possible that a neighborhood with a number of destinations is not walkable. For instance, a street with single-family homes next to a shopping center offering plenty of amenities may not be walkable at all due to there being no sidewalks, no places to safely cross a busy street, and a vast parking lot daunting to traverse on foot.

Another limitation of using Walk Score to gauge an area's walkability is the fact that the results are only as good as the information contained in the database, which is consulted to run the algorithm assigning the score. It is possible that some establishment might be miscategorized as an amenity when in actuality it is not; this was observed in the Capitol Complex and probably skewed the area's Walk Score.

The City of Austin emphasizes walkable urban development. The City's Urban Design Guidelines provide recommendations for new development that enhance walkability, citing a link between a project's economic viability and walkability (City of Austin Design Commission, 2009, p. 33). Streetscape amenities, such as "benches, trash receptacles, planters, […] bike racks, sculpture, and water features" enhance the pedestrian experience (ibid., p. 38). Previous studies have documented the pedestrian environment in other areas of Austin, including the neighborhood surrounding the MLK Red Line commuter rail station and the IH-35 corridor downtown. Chung (2009) measured accessibility to the rail station from surrounding neighborhoods and found that many residential streets were missing sidewalks or were otherwise unsafe for pedestrians. Rodriguez (2010) recommended streetscape amenities to enhance the pedestrian experience in an area totally devoted to motor vehicles.

Placemaking and walkability are useful concepts when considering methods to analyze, interpret, and redevelop urban neighborhoods. As central cities become more desirable not just for places of employment but also for residential properties and social diversions, attention to incorporating placemaking and walkability in redevelopment plans can help to foster economic, social, and environmental vitality, particularly in those areas of American cities that are transitioning from a dominant single-use dynamic (usually offices or industrial areas) to a more mixed-use environment. These office districts may be lacking in destinations, totally car dependent, and devoid of any former vestiges of the neighborhood as it existed decades prior. American capital cities may contain an inordinate proportion of mono-purpose districts. The state government will certainly be a dominant landowner, and large amounts of office space are necessary to staff government functions. Function may be prized over form when it comes to

developing a built environment to house operations, lest taxpayers perceive extravagance on the part of politicians and state executives.

The era of the suburbanization that began after the end of World War II had disastrous effects upon the most central, urbanized portions of American cities. Residents were not the only ones moving out to the suburbs: businesses, too, often followed suit. Large corporations, however, tended to stay in the central city, creating a dichotomous state where the central city served as a command/control center by day (Sassen, 2000) and an empty quarter by night with little activity. Flanking this economic stronghold were neighborhoods where those who could not afford to move away continued to live in increasing marginalization. The concentration of a single activity meant that downtowns failed to provide an array of activities for the general public. Businesses shuttered in the evenings and the clichéd image of tumbleweeds blowing down a deserted urban canyon between high-rises must have filled the minds of many when they pictured downtown.

In the last few decades of the 20th century, a large number of cities made their downtowns 'development districts' and created development corporations to spearhead economic redevelopment and attract investors and residents back to the city (Miles et al., 2007). The Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) is just one example of many. Typical of such corporations, the 3CDC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that is quasi-governmental in nature and is the result of partnerships between various public- and private-sector entities: in this case, the City of Cincinnati, the State of Ohio, and Cincinnati's business community. Its stated goals are to: "create great civic spaces; create high-density/mixed-use development; preserve historic structures and improve streetscapes; and create diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods supported by local businesses" with the downtown area and the adjacent Over-the-Rhine neighborhood (Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation, n.d.). It is important to note that

development corporations such as 3CDC deal with piecemeal projects and parcels belonging to a number of owners. Although the corporation works within a small portion of the city, it by no means works to redevelop the entire neighborhood through one mega-project.

The above example shows how urban redevelopment can be spearheaded by the public sector, usually some offshoot of a municipal government. The properties being redeveloped are usually owned by a number of private landlords, or they may have been acquired by the city. In contrast, redevelopment of state office districts in American capital cities involves a singular landlord, the state government. Administratively this is a complicated situation because of the possibility for state government land use to conflict with local development priorities.

American state capitals are rarely the primary city of their state. Places like Frankfort, Kentucky, Montpelier, Vermont, and Carson City, Nevada are primarily seats of the state government and not much else. Even Austin, much larger than the aforementioned cities, is not the primary city of Texas. However, Austin does have a larger economic and cultural role than just serving as Texas' capital.

State capitals certainly fit the bill of Sassen's "command-and-control" centers (2000), although the business here is state government. The sheer numbers of employees needed to staff the bureaucracy require much more physical space than a typical office or firm. Typically, state governments will house employees in a mixture of leased and publicly-owned office space. There are often entire 'capitol complexes' in the immediate vicinity of the state capitol building. These complexes may be integrated within the grid pattern of the city's street network and may have the effect of creating whole government districts where the sole activity is state bureaucracy. Block after block of nondescript office buildings, historic mansions only a glimmer of their former selves, and repurposed

apartment houses serve as headquarters to the varied and sundry Offices, Departments, Commissions, Cabinets, and Bureaus needed to keep Oregon, Kansas, or North Carolina running. Maintenance on such properties may be long-deferred as state governments struggle to raise revenues in the current recessionary economy. Arizona went so far as to sell state legislative buildings in 2009 to an investor in order to close a budget gap (Benson, 2009). The buildings were then leased back from the new owner.

These government districts are dominated by a single landholder (the State) and a single activity (governance). They may sit idle outside of normal business hours and, aside from the often majestic and grandiose capitol building, attract little interest from everyday citizens. The overlooked zone may have the effect of adding insult to the injury of an already-dead downtown, or stand alone in stark contrast to surrounding neighborhoods, especially in cities where state government is just one of many functions. There may be several reasons why these areas are not integrated with the rest of their host cities, including in part issues related to provision of security, the overarching presence of a singular landlord not concerned with making a profit in the traditional sense, and properties' inherent immunity from local zoning ordinances due to their status as state-owned.

City/State government dynamics

The American state capital city has both the burden and the privilege of hosting the state government. On the one hand, government is a major local employer. Government also tends to attract businesses in the role of support, such as consultants. Government is a relatively recession-proof industry, although furloughs and other involuntary stoppages of work may threaten individual workers' finances from time to time. On the other hand, capital cities are expected to provide services to their state

governments while not receiving tax revenues on state-owned properties. State properties may be immune from local zoning ordinances. Municipal political culture may differ drastically from that of the state, as is surely the case in cities like Austin, Nashville, and Atlanta. The relationship between the state government and the capital city is thus awkward and somewhat fragmented.

State governments own considerable amounts of property within their capital cities, which may constitute a sizeable percentage of a government's assets. In cities with robust real estate markets, like Sacramento and Austin, these properties may be a tempting method of relieving budgetary pressures in cycles of lessened revenues. However, any sort of large-scale redevelopment of state-owned parcels within the boundaries of a capital city will have repercussions beyond the property line. The partnership between the City of Sacramento and the State of California in redevelopment of the Capitol Area is a good example for other projects in how to successfully integrate local priorities with State needs. Working together will ensure that potentially opposing land use policies do not threaten the urban fabric of the host city.

Sacramento: Case study for government district redevelopment

Sacramento, California, is as an example of a state capital that has successfully (although not without controversy) attracted new investment and development to the neighborhoods surrounding the central core of state government offices. The majority of state business in Sacramento occurs in the downtown area. Sacramento was chosen as California's permanent capital in 1854, and the state capitol building was completed in 1869 (California Department of General Services, 1997, p. xi). As state government grew larger, in the 1960s the State acquired properties in a 42-block area near the capitol building, many through eminent domain. The initial plan was to build a 'concrete

campus' [my label] of office buildings surrounding the Capitol, presumably in the impersonal, Brutalist style so popular at the time ("Capitol Park Plan Is Taking Shape After Delay of Decades," 1997). However, subsequent decades and changes of administration saw a hodgepodge approach to facilities planning, and state offices were scattered throughout Sacramento in both leased and publicly-owned spaces (California Department of General Services, 1997, p. xii).

In the 1970s, after the initial 'concrete campus' plan seemed to have lost momentum, the California state government again expressed concern over the consequences of decades of disinvestment in the area surrounding the state Capitol building, including on some 42 blocks containing state-owned parcels (ibid., p.9). Such dilapidated environs insulted the idea of a "noble and monumental seat of government" for the Golden State (ibid., p. 13). In 1977, the "Capitol Area Plan" was adopted by the state legislature. The Plan's goals, to be achieved by the year 2000, included addressing the accommodation of state employees, attraction and retention of affordable housing, integration of the area within the larger urban fabric of downtown Sacramento, ensuring adequate transportation and parking, and creation of a working relationship between the State and the City, among other things (ibid., p. vi). These goals were to achieve "an environment supportive of a vibrant, mixed-use community" (ibid., p. 12).

The plan was updated in 1997 and continues the emphasis on mixed-use development in the zone while utilizing state-owned real estate most efficiently (ibid., p. viii). The Capitol Area Development Authority, a joint venture between the City of Sacramento and the State of California, was created in 1978 to oversee housing and retail projects under the Plan. The California Department of General Services is responsible for administering and updating the Plan (California Department of General Services, 1997, pp. xiv, 19, 94; Capitol Area Development Authority, n.d.).

While the Capitol Area plan seems to have been successful in its quest to create a dignified, lively mixed-use setting for California's government, it has not been entirely without controversy. In the 1960s, many properties in the area were condemned and acquired through eminent domain. Not every property was dilapidated or blighted. The 1977 Capitol Area Plan did not call for immediate redevelopment of all parcels. Instead, parcels would be developed as time allowed and space was needed. Because of this, many parcels were used as interim parking lots or, in the case of one parcel, a community garden. The garden was popular with area residents, and much consternation arose when the garden was removed to make way for a residential project (Fish, 2011). Public spaces can and should be an integral component to any large-scale redevelopment plans. In order to ensure trust and understanding, clear statements of intention should be made at the beginning.

This chapter briefly summarized the history of urban redevelopment in the post-World War II United States. The concept of 'place' and 'placemaking' are important when contemplating redevelopment. Walkability is a component of placemaking that prioritizes pedestrians. Human experience of an urban environment can be enhanced when principles of placemaking and walkability are factored into redevelopment projects. State capital cities in the United States are simultaneously privileged and challenged by the presence of state government. Their downtowns often include areas devoted solely to office space for state government which may not be integrated with the rest of the city. The next chapter will place the Capitol Complex of Austin, Texas, in the context of a post-World War II urban development project that has failed to garner status as a 'place' within the city.

Chapter 2: Austin's Capitol Complex

This chapter will focus on the Capitol Complex and the context of the area within the City of Austin. The particular legal environment of the Complex will be discussed, as will a history of comprehensive planning in both the City of Austin and the Complex. Plans for future redevelopment of the Capitol Complex will be discussed. This chapter serves to present the reader with a background through which the area as it exists today can be understood. This knowledge will help inform policy recommendations in Chapter 4.

The political dynamic in capital cities presents a unique challenge to urban redevelopment. In traditional urban redevelopment projects, a municipal government provides support and oversight through various mechanisms, including legislation, comprehensive planning, and funding schemes. Redeveloped property will belong to numerous landlords, and direct consultation with stakeholders is likely to be undertaken. In the case of state capital cities, entire districts may be property of a single landowner, the state government. These state-owned parcels are often exempted from adhering to municipal land use laws. Therefore, redevelopment of such districts may run counter to local priorities and may not involve any outside stakeholders. The political culture at the state level may also be very different from the municipal politics of the host city, which may lead to discrepancy among priorities. The presence of the state government is both an asset and a potential liability to the host city. Any land development or redevelopment project undertaken by the state government runs the risk of clashing with the priorities of the surrounding city. The Capitol Complex of Austin, Texas, is a particularly salient example of the contrasts between underutilized state-owned properties amidst a rapidly-developing downtown.

Austin was founded as the seat of the Texas government in 1839 (City of Austin Planning Commission, 2012, p. 20). Several capitol buildings existed in different locations around the city before the current capitol officially opened in 1888. The building has been home to the state legislature and governor's office ever since (Texas State Preservation Board, n.d.). The decision to build the Capitol building at its current site was made in 1876. The chosen site allowed for "visual dominance" over the rest of the city (Black, 2008, p. 13). Texans are proud of their capitol building, which occupies a prominent location within Austin's central business district at the top of Congress Avenue. The stunning pink granite exterior and massive scale of the building attract the attentions of visitors to downtown Austin.

The building was surely the focal point of the city's skyline for decades after its completion until engineering and architectural developments made taller buildings possible. Recognizing this, city leaders pressed for height restrictions to preserve the dominance of the state capitol. Today, "Capitol view corridors" protect lines of sight leading up to the building from points around Austin. These corridors are overlay zoning ordinances that restrict building heights on parcels that fall within the overlay. Thus, any skyscraper in Austin must either be built on a parcel entirely outside of the overlay, or must be modified to only rise above a certain height in portions of the parcel not subject to the overlay. These regulations demonstrate Austinites' determination to ensure the Capitol building maintains a stately, prominent presence in the city.

It would be nearly impossible to visit central Austin and not notice the Capitol building. What *is* likely to go unnoticed on a visit to the area, however, is the rather uninspiring zone just north of the Capitol building. This is the "Capitol Complex," a campus for bureaucracy that is home to several state office buildings, parking lots, and parking garages. The Complex for the most part is integrated within the original grid

pattern of city streets but lacks a unified aesthetic; instead, its components have been built piecemeal over time as space was needed and funds allowed.

Illustration 2.1: Digitized aerial view of the Capitol Complex (area within yellow lines) (*Google Earth*, n.d.)

The Capitol Complex is a starkly uninteresting district in contrast with its surroundings, the University of Texas campus to the north and the increasingly bustling central business district to the south. It is a mono-centric area where state government activities are the dominant land use and few vestiges remain of the neighborhood that existed before the Complex's development. It has been dismissed by many as "lifeless after 5:00pm" and, more condemningly, "the greatest single problem of Central Austin's built environment […]: scale-less, inhumane, and inactive" (Black, 2008, p. 14; McCann, 2008, p. 37).

Initially, all state business was conducted within the walls of the Texas Capitol. As state government grew over time, the physical space provided by the Capitol building became inadequate for the needs of Texans. By the 1940s, the State had resorted to leasing office space in Austin to house many of its employees. The perceived negative consequences of renting space all over town concerned some lawmakers. In 1941, the Texas Legislature passed a concurrent resolution recognizing that continued leasing of office space for state employees in dispersed locations throughout the city cost the State both financially as well as in terms of efficiency. The resolution encouraged the State to consider its expansion needs via a "well considered plan, whereby the maximum efficiency in the State Departments may be maintained at the least expense" (Moffett, 1941). State-owned properties were preferable to leased ones. Locating employees near the Capitol would help to increase efficiency and communication.

In 1954 the State Building Commission (now the Texas General Facilities Commission (TFC)) was created to plan for and oversee all State office buildings (Harold F. Wise Associates, 1956, p. 1). At that time, nearly one-third of state employees were housed in rented facilities all over Austin (State Building Commission, 1963). The "well considered plan" requested in the aforementioned resolution finally came in 1956 after several years of deliberation. The 1956 Capitol Area Master Plan was unfortunately just one of several uncompleted attempts over the ensuing decades to fashion a unified vision for the expansion of state-owned real estate just north of the Capitol building.

The future Capitol Complex was not the only area being scrutinized in the 1950s. At the same time, the City of Austin was also undergoing a comprehensive planning process. In an important showing of cooperation, the City and State utilized the same consultant for the two plans (State Building Commission, 1963). Since state government is a prevailing industry in the city in terms of both physical and economic presence,

making its planning process insular from the rest of Austin would be somewhat supercilious. Development in downtown Austin prior to the late 1950s was criticized for threatening to destroy the visual prominence of the Capitol building (Harold F. Wise Associates, 1956, p. 2). Thus, one of the components of the 1956 Plan was to ensure the dominance of the Capitol over any new construction.

At the time, what is today the Capitol Complex was dominated by single- and multi-family homes interspersed with some small-scale retail. Aerial photographs from 1955 show a neighborhood which was not markedly different from surrounding land uses, save for the Capitol building and the University of Texas campus (State Building Commission, 1963). Indeed, one critic of the Capitol Complex as it exists today states that the pre-existing neighborhood was "New Urbanist" before the term even existed (Cleary, 2008, p. 40) because the area was characterized by "blended densities, (walkability), interconnectivity, vibrant work/live/play centers, and human-scale design" (Wynn, 2008, p. 9). New Urbanism is a design and urban planning concept that, among other things, gives more deference to the human experience of an area as a pedestrian instead of behind the wheel of a car. The Capitol Corridor was still a walkable area at the time.

The 1956 Plan, however, envisioned a complete demolition of the neighborhood between 14th and 19th Streets (known today as MLK, Jr. Boulevard). The apartment homes, churches, single-family houses, and small businesses would be replaced with what can only be described by a 21st century observer as 'Sovietesque' monolithic domino-like buildings balanced between the Capitol building and the University of Texas campus (Harold F. Wise Associates, 1956, pp. 22–23). These large, uniform edifices would house various State offices. Indicative of the by then well-established trend of workers driving alone to work (in 1955, almost 60% of Capitol Complex employees

drove their own cars to work (Harold F. Wise Associates, 1956, p. 2)), the Plan offered two alternatives for dealing with parking. “Plan A” called for underground parking garages so as to preserve open space at ground level, while “Plan B” depended on vast surface parking lots (Harold F. Wise Associates, 1956, pp. 14–17). East-west street connectivity would have been disrupted by the campus of buildings: a strange outcome, considering the plan is preoccupied with efficient vehicular traffic flows (Harold F. Wise Associates, 1956, p. 13).

Development of the Capitol Complex began in 1959 with construction of the Texas Supreme Court building to the northwest of the Capitol. Over the next three years, four more office buildings were constructed, as well as the State Archives and Library. However, the main element of the 1956 Plan (the ‘domino set’ of massive, characterless buildings) went mercifully unrealized. Had the consultants’ 1956 vision for the Capitol Complex become a reality, there would possibly be no talk today of redevelopment in the area, for the foundational structure of the neighborhood as it existed (found today in the Complex’s streets that are mostly faithful to Austin’s grid pattern, a smattering of surviving historical buildings, etc.) would have lost the battle with the bulldozers.

Shortly after the 1956 Plan debuted, the Austin City Council officially adopted the separate-but-coinciding ‘Austin Plan’ in 1961 (State Building Commission, 1963). According to that plan, the City’s responsibilities included ensuring that the Capitol area continue to be a source of pride for all Texans. Indicative of the trends of the time, the plan literally underscores sections of text regarding the need for provision of off-street parking. The topic of height restrictions for buildings is also addressed (Pacific Planning and Research, 1958, p. 37). Development of land surrounding the Capitol was couched as an inherently joint city-state undertaking, fostered mainly through city actions such as zoning for offices, multi-family housing, and limited commercial. The Austin Plan

recommends a joint advisory committee made up of members from the City and the State to oversee development in the environs of the Capitol (Pacific Planning and Research, 1958, p. 38).

Despite the bold visions and broad reach of the two plans — the Austin Plan and the 1956 Capitol Area Master Plan — just seven years later the State found itself once again wondering what to do with the Capitol Complex. In 1963, the State Building Commission issued a report that falls short of being a true comprehensive plan, but nonetheless outlines a strategy to meet the future office space needs of the state government. The 'domino set' idea was not explicitly dismissed, but according to the wording of the report it seems to have been a foregone conclusion that future development of the Capitol Complex would be piecemeal with varying smaller scale projects.

Over the next few decades, slow but steady progress turned the former traditional 'proto New Urbanist' neighborhood into the contemporary, ghastly 'non-place' Capitol Complex. The State acquired land in stages, and eventually the collection of publicly-owned parcels totaled 122 acres (70 city blocks) by 2001 (Texas Facilities Commission, 2012, p. 4). What defines the Capitol Complex today is precisely what it is *not*, or what is does *not have*. There is no cohesiveness in architectural style, in urban design, or even in streetscape. Multi-level concrete paneled parking garages stand bulkily next to vast asphalt parking lots baking under the intense Texas sun. Manicured, corporate-looking landscaping hugs office buildings a block away from patches of dead grass trampled by feet where sidewalks do not exist. A historic business which incredibly survived the bulldozer is one of the few destinations in the area, its side wall flush with a parking garage. This discontinuity is undoubtedly indicative of the failure to adopt a unified vision for the area (Cleary, 2008, p. 40), despite numerous attempts at comprehensive

strategy and plan making. After the 1963 State Building Commission report/'plan,' attempts to further order development were undertaken in 1979 and 1989 (Texas Sunset Advisory Commission, 2013, p. 11). Meanwhile, construction of even more parking garages and office buildings continued until 2000, when the most recent state office building in the Complex was completed (Texas Facilities Commission, 2012, p. 9).

Most descriptions of the Capitol Complex as it exists today are deservedly unflattering. The destructive origins of the zone, as well the physical built and emotional environment, are subject to derision. Critics pan the area as dull and uninspiring, a mono-purpose 'non-place' that is strictly diurnal and somnolent (Clifton, 2012; McCann, 2008, p. 37). They mourn the loss of a neighborhood which, if left intact, would have been a "perfect model" of New Urbanism. What exists now is a "scale-less, inhumane, and inactive" void between the University of Texas campus and downtown Austin (Black, 2008, p. 14) that completely ignores an important natural feature coursing through it, Waller Creek (Cleary, 2008, p. 40). Preoccupation with automobile circulation, an all-important goal of the 1956 Plan, has resulted in a "totally automobile dominant" environment (Black & Smith, 2008, p. 145) that is at best marginally walkable (Clifton, 2012).

Illustration 2.2: Waller Creek flows ignored through the Capitol Complex. (Photo by author.)

The Capitol Complex appears even more lifeless when compared to the surrounding city, which is one of the fastest-growing in the country. Once dominated by state government activities and the University of Texas, the Austin economy has diversified and survived economic recessions relatively unscathed in comparison to other cities. Further attracting newcomers are the city's unique character, pleasant climate, high quality of life, and relatively low cost of living. As a result, the city's population has nearly doubled every twenty years. Managing this growth effectively has been a key political point of recent city administrations, especially considering that until recently the city was operating under a comprehensive plan adopted in 1979, comically out-of-date for today's metropolis.

Even before Austin was on the national radar as a desirable place to live and the growth dynamic really gained momentum, municipal leaders were engaging in comprehensive planning. The comprehensive plan of 1928 lives on in notoriety due to its policy of racial segregation (City of Austin Planning Commission, 2012, p. 20). However, the plan did have the forethought to express the need to protect the dignity of

the Capitol building's surroundings through thoughtful planning, especially when considering the future needs of office space needs for the State (State Building Commission, 1963).

As mentioned, the "Austin Plan" adopted by the City Council in 1961 was developed simultaneously with the 1956 Capitol Area Master Plan by the same consultant. As a result, strategies were recommended to harmoniously combine private development in the city with the public sector-driven Capitol Complex project. The Austin Plan called for a working group made up of a coalition of stakeholders from both the City and State (despite the fact that its campus borders the Capitol Complex, representatives from the University of Texas were omitted from the recommendation) (Pacific Planning and Research, 1958, p. 38). The citizens of Austin thus have a special burden not shared by denizens of any other Texas municipality. They are entrusted to ensure that the seat of state government is afforded due dignity in an appropriate setting. The citizens of Austin have accepted the responsibility. The City's land development code includes provisions for maintaining views of the Capitol building from points throughout the city, as well as for protecting the dominance of the Capitol vis-à-vis surrounding buildings (Mayor and Council of the City of Austin, Texas, n.d.). However, the City's responsibility and oversight of development on state-owned land is limited. State-owned parcels may be exempt from zoning ordinances and other municipal land development requirements. There is nothing to keep the State from pursuing development in the Capitol Complex that is opposed to the spirit of Austin's preferences for future growth and urban development.

The most recent comprehensive plan for Austin is the "Imagine Austin" plan, adopted by the City Council in June 2012. Among several of the plan's principles is the desire for clustered growth in activity centers connected to other similar areas of the city

(City of Austin Planning Commission, n.d.). Unlike some of its predecessors, the Imagine Austin plan does not specifically mention the Capitol Complex or the expansion needs of state government. The city government for all intents and purposes considers the Capitol Complex to be a part of downtown (Knox, pers. int. 2013). The "Public Building Policies" in the plan are focused on city-owned properties like public libraries, not state-owned edifices (City of Austin Planning Commission, 2012, p. 164).

Between 1979's "Austin Tomorrow" and 2012's "Imagine Austin" comprehensive plans, several planning documents emerged to serve as interim policy statements to guide growth and development in the burgeoning city. In 2000, the City Council adopted design guidelines for projects in downtown Austin. The latest version of the guidelines was issued in February 2009 under the new name "Urban Design Guidelines for Austin" (see City of Austin Design Commission, 2009).

The impetus for the design guidelines was a resurgence of interest in the 1990s in redeveloping downtown Austin. The City administration played a role in promoting projects in the central core. Public-private partnerships were used to finance some key residential projects. Plans to improve the landscape along the downtown portion of Waller Creek (which flows ignored through the Capitol Complex; see Illustration 02) were born (City of Austin Design Commission, 2009, p. 3)

The tenets of the Urban Design Guidelines are: Humane character; Density; Sustainability; Diversity; Economic Vitality; Civic Art; A Sense of Time; Unique Character; Authenticity; Safety; and a Connection to the Outdoors. (City of Austin Design Commission, 2009, p. 6) The guidelines address public buildings, although they do not specifically distinguish between state- and city-owned properties. The text generalizes public sector buildings in Austin as inaccessible and not integrated with their surroundings. These edifices have failed to make 'places' of themselves, and the

streetscapes surrounding them are lacking (City of Austin Design Commission, 2009, p. 1). Although Austin's public buildings are reported to not be 'places' of their own right, the design guidelines discourage the creation of "theme environments" (City of Austin Design Commission, 2009, p. 28). This suggests that there is a difference between subtle placemaking and over-the-top adornment of spaces, a notion consistent with the literature on placemaking. Gieryn (2000) advocates environments that are made authentic by human activity. Similarly, Carr and Servon state that a 'place' must have some sort of "vernacular culture" that arises spontaneously from centers of activity (2008, p. 30). The organic nature of 'places' is not something that can be manufactured.

Overall desired projects in the downtown area include multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level (City of Austin Design Commission, 2009, p. 71). The guidelines make a connection between economic vitality and pedestrian activity, which can be fostered through appropriate design tailored to the hot, sunny climate of Austin (City of Austin Design Commission, 2009, pp. 33, 38).

Other visions for the downtown area pursued by the city government include a plan to make over the Waller Creek riparian zone and a "Great Streets" program. Waller Creek is a waterway flowing past the Capitol Complex and along the edge of downtown, eventually emptying into the Colorado River at Lady Bird Lake. For decades, downtown turned its back on the creek, which was a trash-strewn canal when not flooding. In 1998, a series of improvements meant to control flooding were approved by voters. This action allowed for 28 acres of valuable real estate to be removed from floodplain and its accompanying development restrictions. A Waller Creek Master Plan was approved by the City Council in 2010. Chief among its goals are the establishment of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along the creek's course, as well as development which will face into the creek, embracing its natural features (City of Austin, 2011).

The Great Streets initiative offers developers financial support from the city to construct a streetscape to accompany their project that fosters the principles of walkability. Funding is limited to a zone covering the most central area of downtown Austin, and does not extend to the Capitol Complex. A portion of parking meter revenues collected in the district partially funds the program (City of Austin, 2012). Streetscape amenities, such as "benches, trash receptacles, planters, […] bike racks, sculpture, and water features" support the pedestrian experience (City of Austin Design Commission, 2009, pp. 38). One City employee estimates that street improvements under the program can cost as much as $1 million per block side (Knox, pers. int. 2013). Developers voluntarily participate in the Great Streets program. Some may be looking to increase their returns by offering a more walkable property (see Pivo & Fisher, 2011), while others may do so out of a perceived increase in likelihood in gaining administrative approval for other aspects of the development (Knox, pers. int. 2013). At any rate, there are policies and guidelines in place in downtown Austin that encourage walkable development. Their success is at least anecdotally supported by the number of pedestrians on the streets.

Outside the purview of the City of Austin and its various development programs, the Texas Facilities Commission finds itself in 2013 in a similar predicament that its predecessor, the State Building Commission, did in the 1950s. State government operations are required by law to utilize state-owned facilities. Only when such facilities have been exhausted can the State lease space in privately-owned buildings (Dukes, pers. int. 2013). Currently, state-owned facilities are at 100% holding capacity (Texas Facilities Commission, 2012, p. 12). It is becoming increasingly more expensive to rent office space to meet the State's needs, especially in Austin, where the real estate market is relatively healthy even after the recent economic recession. The State paid $42.6

million to lease three million square feet of office space in Travis County in 2011. That same year, legislators were scrambling to cover a reduction in revenues coming in to the state government. Lease costs in Travis County have gone up 250% from 2000-2011, leading some to question why the State should continue to pay to lease space when it is the largest land owner in Austin's central business district (Copelin, 2011a). After more than a decade of intense development, full city blocks other than the underutilized state-owned parcels targeted for redevelopment are no longer available to developers wishing to complete projects in downtown Austin. The state still retains ownership of 20% of all downtown Austin parcels that could be redeveloped (Texas Facilities Commission, 2012, p. 17).

Prior to the economic recession of the late 2000s, the State was developing a plan for housing workers that totally disregarded holdings in the Capitol Complex. There was talk of building an entire government 'campus' from the ground up at the eastern edge of the city, near the new 130 toll road. This plan would have gone against one of the underlying goals of the 1956 Plan; i.e. to increase efficiency by consolidating state operations into a single area. Instead of having the three branches of government located within a radius of a few blocks, many of the administrative functions would have moved miles away if the new campus had been constructed.

In 2010, Terry Keel, a well-known figure in Austin politics, became executive director of the Texas Facilities Commission. After his arrival, the plan to relocate offices to the eastern edge of Austin lost momentum. Instead, the TFC announced a new policy pursuit: the "Capitol Area Development Plan." This plan refocused on the Capitol Complex as a home for state agencies and called for the use of public-private partnerships to construct new buildings to house workers and offices (Texas Facilities Commission, 2012). New development would include residential condominiums and commercial

establishments around the periphery, some of which could be located in the place of existing parking garages or on vacant parcels/surface parking lots (Copelin, 2011a).

In 2012, the TFC issued its "Facilities Master Plan Report" which stated that of the 122 acres in the Capitol Complex, 21 were identified as "under-developed." These parcels are mostly dedicated to parking, either in garages or on surface lots. Redevelopment of these parcels could add up to 7.1 million square feet of usable space to the Complex's inventory. The assertion that only 1.2 million square feet of this total would be needed for offices suggests that the remaining 5.8 million square feet could be leased to private entities (Dukes, pers. int. 2013). The report specifically mentions a "mixed-use" approach to development (Texas Facilities Commission, 2012, p. 4). This is refreshingly consistent with recent trends in development in downtown Austin. Further compatible with city-wide trends is the intention of the Commission to ensure that new development adheres to some of the City's land development regulations, such as floor/area ratios, setback requirements, and Capitol View Corridor overlay zoning. This is a promising first step towards integrating the Capitol Complex's built environment with the rest of downtown Austin.

Aundre Dukes, Portfolio Manager and Public Liaison for the Texas Facilities Commission, said in an interview that the TFC is currently pursuing a multi-part redevelopment plan for the Capitol Complex. Three new State office buildings will be constructed along North Congress Avenue where there are currently vacant lots. These office buildings would account for the additional 1.2 million square feet of office space needed, as mentioned in the Facilities Master Plan Report, which would be adequate for the needs of state government for the next 60 years. As of the time of this writing, the TFC does not have funding for construction, which would come from appropriations from the Legislature. A second component of the TFC redevelopment plan is the

transformation of North Congress Avenue into a park-like mall with underground parking. This would help to connect the Capitol Building with the museums at North Congress Avenue and MLK, Jr. Boulevard.

The San Jacinto Boulevard corridor, currently lined with parking garages, would be more or less completely redeveloped through public/private partnerships utilizing ground-leases. New buildings would replace many of the parking garages. Mr. Dukes stated in a personal interview that despite the 26,000-27,000 people working in the Capitol Complex daily, approximately 3,000 parking spaces sit vacant every day. It would therefore make better sense to replace idle parking spaces with revenue-earning property. The mixed-use buildings would house apartments, retail, and office space.

Capitol Complex redevelopment according to the visions outlined in the Commission's report has the potential to revive the area and make it more compatible with existing development trends. The amount of available space allows for large-scale projects which would have a greater effect than smaller, more piecemeal ones. Adherence to municipal guidelines and ordinances would ensure that the Capitol building remains central to the area's urban experience, and mixed-use development can create a variety of uses and activities in the Capitol Complex, something that is sorely missing because of the heavy concentration of offices. Residential development at a large scale would contribute to more round-the-clock activity and help the area become a true neighborhood again: "additional cultural amenities; a network of public open spaces; a greater mixture of uses […] for a more balanced vitality […] and an economic catalyst" (Cleary, 2008, p. 40). However, time is of the essence. Many State office leases in Travis County will expire in 2017-2020. If new office space in the Capitol Complex is not ready by then, the State will have to renegotiate expensive leases (Dukes, pers. int. 2013).

One criticism of the TFC's Capitol Area Master Plan is that it is not coordinated with other state agencies with a stake in the Capitol Complex. In total, three agencies have some control over what goes on at the Capitol Complex: Texas Facilities Commission; the General Land Office; and the Texas State Preservation Board. Each agency is required to undergo "sunset review" and periodically prepare strategic plans to guide agency business. The most recent sunset review of the Texas Facilities Commission found that the agency's vision for the future of the Capitol Complex is not unified with those of the other two 'caretaker' agencies (Texas Sunset Advisory Commission, 2013). One of the other agencies, the General Land Office, solely concerns itself with determining whether or not state property is underutilized, and if so, if a sale is warranted (Texas Sunset Advisory Commission, 2013, p. 12; Siddall, pers. int. 2013). The Texas State Preservation Board's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan mentions the idea of a "cultural campus" in the northern section of the Complex. The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum opened in 2001. One of the few destinations of its own right in the Complex, the museum is across the street from the Blanton Museum of Art on the UT campus (Texas State Preservation Board, 2010, pp. 8, 24). An organization attempting to build a planetarium on a parcel currently used as a surface parking lot is another component of the 'cultural campus' theme (Austin Planetarium, n.d.). This area, also referred to as the "Museum District," could serve as a strong destination for luring visitors to the area (Knox, pers. int. 2013). Meanwhile, the construction of a new medical school near the northeast corner of the Complex has Austin mayor Lee Leffingwell hinting that spillover development from that could occur in the area (Coppola, 2013). In personal interviews, several sources cited the potential the new medical school has to generate interest in developing new properties along San Jacinto Boulevard and in the northwest corner of the Capitol Complex (Dukes, pers. int. 2013; Knox, pers. int. 2013).

Illustration 2.3: Surface parking lot and suggested future site of the Austin Planetarium. (Photo by the author.)

The General Land Office (GLO) holds the deeds to all state-owned parcels. Any outright sale of land is coordinated through that office. The GLO periodically reviews all state landholdings in an attempt to determine what parcels are underutilized or otherwise redundant. If retaining ownership of a parcel is not deemed to be in the best interests of the State, the GLO can recommend that the parcel be sold. After the GLO recommends a parcel be sold, the Governor (or Legislature, if in session) can approve or deny the sale. In the case of no specific action within 90 days, the sale is deemed approved (Dukes, pers. int. 2013; Siddall, pers. int. 2013). For example, the historic gas station on the corner of 15th and San Jacinto, a vestige of the former neighborhood and a rare colorful

sight in the Complex, was sold after inaction on the part of the Governor. The sale occurred contrary to the wishes of the TFC (Dukes, pers. int. 2013).

The Texas Facilities Commission has indicated that it favors public-private partnerships for Capitol Complex redevelopment. A public-private partnership (sometimes called a 'P3') in its most general form is a mutual undertaking between a private actor and the public sector producing something of benefit for each participant. In the context of development, a private developer will gain profit while the public sector will gain needed facilities (Garcia, 1984, p. 14). Without the partnership, the project might not be enticing enough to either party singularly to become a reality. Public/private partnerships have been used to redevelop underutilized government-owned land. The government can outright sell or otherwise lease land to a developer through the P3 process. In the case of a sale, the financial gain to the government is strictly one-off (see Benen, n.d.; Benson, 2009 for an example of how Arizona sold off state property, including the state legislative chambers, in order to cover a deficit.) In the case of a ground-lease, the government leases the land to a developer but reserves the right to reoccupy the property after a set period, e.g. 99 years. Any improvements on the land will become property of the government.

The benefit of a ground-lease over sale of underutilized government land is that with a ground-lease, the government can influence what sort of development occurs on the site. After all, the government is reserving title to the property to itself. Also, the government retains the land in its inventory of properties. In places where the value of land is steadily appreciating, such as central Austin, the public benefits through retention of a valuable asset (Garcia, 1984, p. 26).

Proposals in Texas for public-private partnerships can either be solicited or unsolicited. A solicited proposal is one where a public announcement is made inviting

developers to submit their plans to the public entity overseeing projects. An unsolicited proposal simply arrives at the entity without formal invitation and can be considered or discarded. Examples of public-private partnerships in Austin include the Triangle and Central Park developments on North Lamar Boulevard. These projects were undertaken via solicited proposals (Copelin, 2011b). In 2011, the Texas Legislature passed the 2011 Public and Private Facilities and Infrastructure Act. This act tried to set ground rules for proposal procedures. However, some critics say that the legislation was passed too hastily (Editorial Board, 2013).

From 2011-2012, the Texas Facilities Commission accepted under the 2011 legislative act only unsolicited proposals for Capitol Complex redevelopment. Each developer had to pay a fee of $5,000 upon submitting a proposal for review. It is important to note that the details of each unsolicited proposal would not be public record until formally approved by the TFC (Copelin, 2011b). Projects that are likely to be approved would rehabilitate State-owned parking structures along San Jacinto Boulevard into mixed-use residential, office, and commercial projects. The State would reserve ownership of the land (Copelin, 2013; Dukes, pers. int. 2013).

Detractors of the unsolicited proposal process have expressed concerns over lack of transparency. The fear is that behind closed doors, the likelihood of practicing favoritism with respect to which proposal is approved for a public-private partnership is high. There are questions as to whether or not the public would get the best deal, especially in 'ground-lease' scenarios where the State would act as tenant to a developer (Copelin, 2011b). The Capitol Complex belongs to all Texans, and it is the responsibility of all parties involved to ensure that Texans get the best possible deal out of any financial agreement involving public land. After all, the impetus to redevelop the Capitol Complex is mainly financial and stems from two key points: 1) a desire to save money that would

otherwise be spent on leasing office space for state agencies; and 2) a desire to augment state revenues through lease/sale of public properties.

The perceived threat of a state-sponsored 'fire sale' to quickly dispose of parcels in the Complex and/or negotiate development agreements behind closed doors caused the Sunset Advisory Commission to recommend in 2012 that lawmakers temporarily halt the public-private partnership proposal process that began in 2011. Concerns over lack of transparency, the hasty nature by which the interest in redevelopment began, and the lack of coordination amongst all three Capitol Complex oversight agencies was enough to convince legislators in the 2013 session that a moratorium was warranted (Copelin, 2013). Further complicating matters was the suggestion from GLO Director Jerry Patterson that all Capitol Complex properties be exempted from periodic GLO review in order to avoid conflicting goals between the GLO, the TFC, and TSPB (Dukes, pers. int. 2013; Siddall, pers. int. 2013; Texas Facilities Commission, 2012). This would require a change in legislation, which would need to happen during the current session to be effective. The Sunset Advisory Commission voted to recommend that no proposals for development be reviewed until 01 September 2013, after the legislative session has ended and presumably more clarification comes from the House and Senate chambers on how to proceed with Capitol Complex redevelopment (Editorial Board, 2013). Projects like the Austin Planetarium are now on hold, despite their backers having spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on planning. Some lawmakers think that this stoppage will discourage private developers from doing business with the State. However, the interests of the people of Texas are at stake. A carefully planned, comprehensive and coordinated effort is prudent. The additional time afforded by the moratorium may also allow for stakeholders to consider 'placemaking' improvements which could be stipulated as part of redevelopment projects, or done in anticipation of them in order to attract the most

value for the State. Comprehensive planning prioritizes goals in a transparent way and helps to prevent piecemeal approaches at redevelopment. A comprehensive plan for the Capitol Complex can create a lasting, positive, transparent approach to State-led redevelopment. However, this presupposes that the State will actually adhere to the plan, something that it has struggled with in the past.

Past attempts at comprehensive planning in the Capitol Complex have not been very influential in the way the area developed. This is in contrast to the surrounding city, where the effects of comprehensive planning are visible all over Austin. The 1929 municipal plan that officially endorsed racial segregation created a residential dynamic that is still visible over 80 years later. The 1979 Austin Tomorrow plan guided the city through three decades of runaway growth. The newly-adopted Imagine Austin plan of 2012 will no doubt shape the look and feel of the city for the foreseeable future. Interim neighborhood and area plans, as well as urban design guidelines and programs, have influenced the built environment in Austin. This is particularly true of the central business district, which in recent years has enjoyed a renewed interest in development favoring high density, mixed-use projects with an emphasis on walkable streets.

Unfortunately, the effectiveness of city municipal planning has not been replicated in the Capitol Complex. Due to its status of being almost entirely State-owned, the Capitol Complex is exempted from many municipal regulations regarding land use. Therefore, it is up to the State to set the agenda for the area's development. In the aftermath of acquiring the land now comprising the Capitol Complex and dismantling the pre-existing neighborhood, the first in a series of Capitol Complex comprehensive plans (The Capitol Area Master Plan of 1956) was made, and promptly ignored. Mercifully, state business is not conducted from buildings resembling a domino set, as was proposed in that plan. However, failure to adhere to the 1956 plan and the subsequent lack of vision

over the ensuing decades meant that future development in the Capitol Complex was piecemeal in nature. New buildings were constructed as space was needed and money allowed, resulting in a jumbled, inconsistent government campus.

As more and more offices were built in the Capitol Complex, new parking garages and surface lots accompanied them to accommodate the increasing number of workers. The pedestrian infrastructure of the neighborhood was altered in the process. Massive concrete garages taking up entire blocks precluded any shade trees or benches. Curb cuts allowing vehicles to access the garages and lots brought vehicles up and over the sidewalks. The concentration of a single activity, office work, meant that the district sat inactive at night and on weekends. In 2013, the uninspiring, unattractive Capitol Complex sits in stark contrast to the bustling UT campus and downtown Austin.

The next chapter focuses on research conducted with the goal of demonstrating that the Capitol Complex is plagued by being a 'non-place' that is not walkable. Analyses of land use, the built environment, and features relating to walkability paint a picture of a district that could use some intervention and planning in accordance with the principles of 'placemaking' and walkability in anticipation of and in tandem with redevelopment. The Capitol Complex has the potential to serve the needs the State government while also catering to visitors and potential new residents and employees. The challenges lie in identifying shortcomings of the physical environment hindering pedestrian activity (to be highlighted in the next chapter) and also in identifying policy-based solutions to ensure that any sort of planning process does not fall by the wayside (to be discussed in Chapter 4).

Chapter 3: The Austin Capitol Complex: Findings & Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis of the Capitol Complex conducted in the fall of 2012. At that point in time, plans were being contemplated to guide redevelopment of the Complex. One bold new project, a high-rise condominium and planetarium had also been announced (Austin Planetarium, n.d.). Every few weeks, an article would surface in the *Austin American-Statesman* reporting on some new development regarding redevelopment preparations. The Texas State Legislature was due to meet a few months later, in 2013. It seemed as though the Capitol Complex was on the cusp of beginning a new chapter of its service to the State.

I was relatively familiar with area, being both a resident of Austin and a student at the neighboring University of Texas. The Capitol Complex did not have much personal significance for me. It struck me as an anomaly amidst the other central neighborhoods of the city, which are relatively active places enjoying the national (perhaps global) popularity of Austin. I found it odd that such an uninspiring area existed mere blocks away from my classroom, where I was learning about urban planning and design. My relationship to the Capitol Complex was completely utilitarian: I utilized its peripheral corridors, Lavaca Street and San Jacinto Boulevard, to get downtown from campus. The Capitol Complex itself was never a destination for me. I saw it first as boring and bureaucratic, a physical manifestation of the banalities of the day-to-day operations of state government. Later, I came to see the Complex as underutilized and lacking in many of the features that I had come to understand make an urban space a 'place.'

News articles about the proposed redevelopment seemed to prove that my emotional reaction to the Capitol Complex was not due to personal eccentricity: many people seemed to share my opinion. However, the news articles mostly talked about the

political maneuverings and broad policy statements surrounding changes in the Capitol Complex. In order to actually demonstrate that the Capitol Complex is as unpleasing as I thought it was, I needed to conduct field research. Simply repeating what had been written in journals, edited volumes on architecture, and the newspaper would not suffice. The analysis presented in this chapter is an attempt to transform my initial, emotional response to the Capitol Complex into an objective and quantifiable study. A variety of methods were used to conduct the analysis, including data analysis and map creation using geospatial information systems (GIS), field visits, and pedestrian counts. More details about these methods are given below.

Illustration 3.1: Typical street scene in the Capitol Complex: Brazos Street between 17th and 18th. (Photo by the author.)

The Capitol Complex as defined in this study is slightly different from the official definition. I decided to define the Capitol Complex as the area north of 13th Street, east of Lavaca Street, west of Trinity Street, and south of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The Texas State Preservation Board includes areas south of 13th Street in maps of the Capitol Complex. There are several State-owned office buildings in this expanded area. However, I chose to draw

the boundary at 13th Street because I understood that redevelopment was to be concentrated north of that parallel. The southern fringes of the State Preservation Board's definition are decidedly within downtown Austin and thus do not suffer from the allegations with which I charge the rest of the Capitol Complex.

In order to present my findings regarding the physical and regulatory environment of the Capitol Complex, I decided that maps would work best. I used ESRI's ArcGIS software to amalgamate and display spatial data. The City of Austin and the Capital Area Council of Governments have extensive spatial data available for free on their websites. I availed myself of their offerings. I also created my own tables of administrative parcel features from data obtained from the Travis Central Appraisal District (TCAD). The TCAD data and the data from the City of Austin utilized the same parcel identification numbers, so it was easy to join the data for analysis.

Land-use and zoning analysis

First, I wanted to document current land uses and zoning in the Capitol Complex in order to understand just how prevalent state government is in the area. I used data from the City of Austin's GIS portal, making manual corrections when necessary. For instance, one parcel on Lavaca Street was the site of a condominium project that stalled when the economy went into recession in 2008. The half-built structure was eventually completed and is now a hotel. Thus, I had to update the classification of the parcel from 'apartment/condo' to 'commercial.'

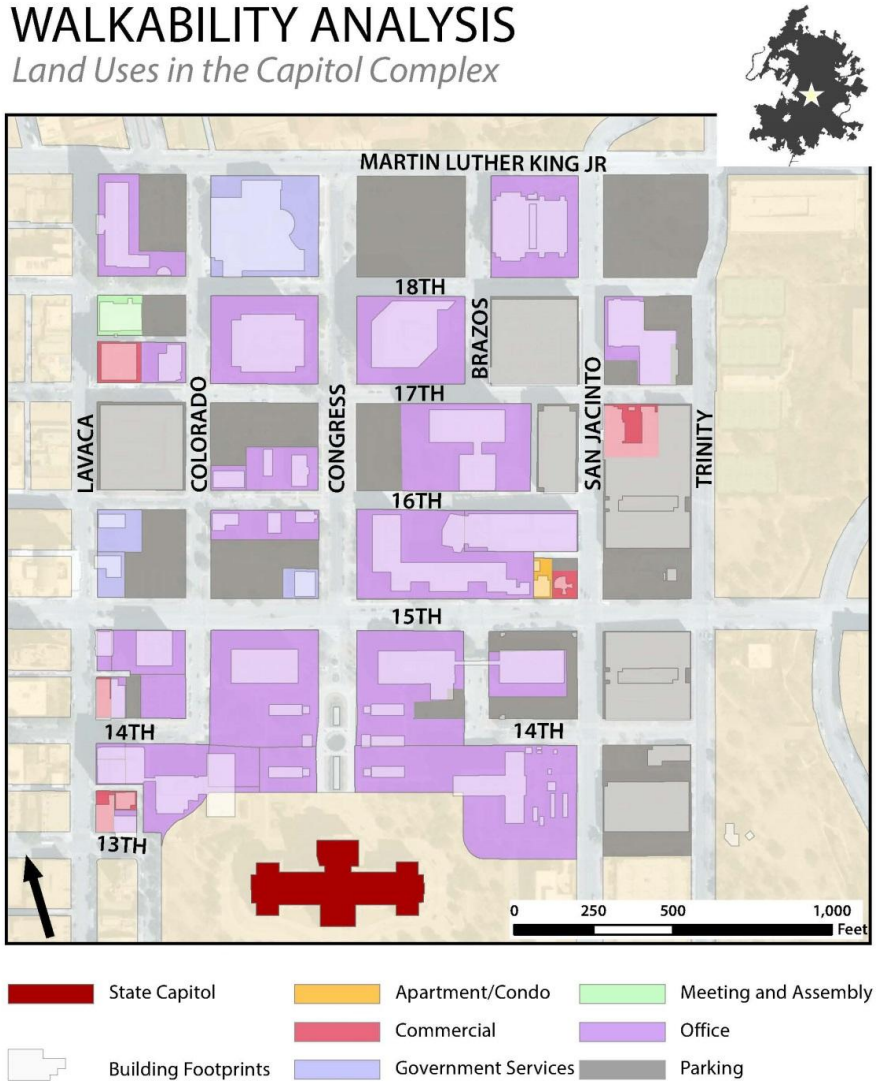


Illustration 3.2: Land uses in the Capitol Complex.

The land use analysis exhibited in Illustration 3.2 shows that the Capitol Complex is dominated by offices and parking infrastructure. Of the roughly 67 acres included in the analysis, almost 29 acres are dedicated to parking (43% of total land area). Parked cars are accommodated in multi-storey garages and surface lots. The garages are massive structures that take up virtually the entire parcel upon which they are located. By contrast, office buildings are often set back from the street and occupy a smaller percentage of the parcel. There are very few commercial establishments in the Capitol Complex. A historic building that once housed a gas station currently sits vacant at the corner of San Jacinto and 15th Street. The Sholtz Garten, a historic bar/restaurant, is at San Jacinto and 17th Street. Other commercial establishments are on Lavaca Street, including the Texas Chili Parlor and a hotel. Commercial establishments play important roles in walkable 'places.' They can serve as destinations for pedestrians. Restaurants can attract office workers during the lunch hour, while bars might capture happy hour trade. One building on 15th Street identified as 'apartment/condo' appeared to be vacant.

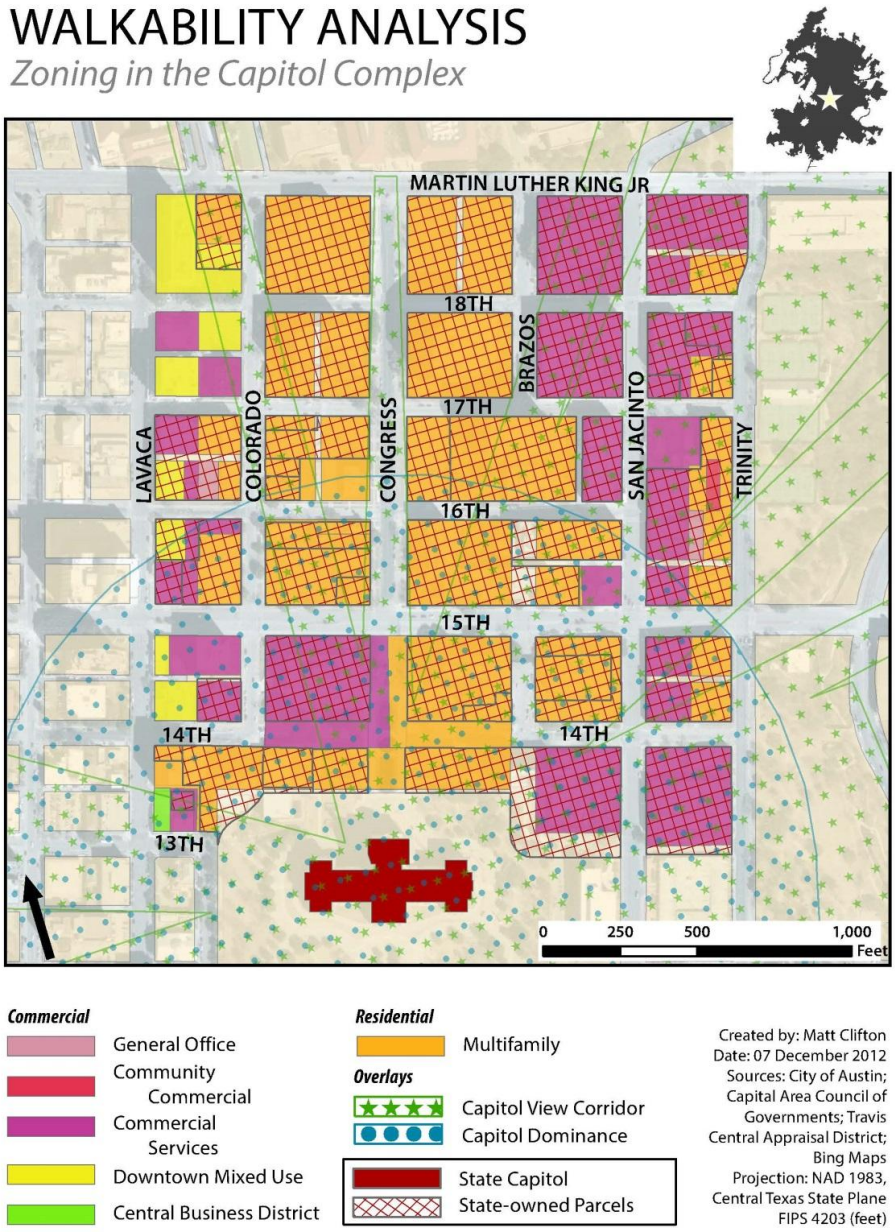


Illustration 3.3: Zoning in the Capitol Complex.

The State of Texas in the capacity of landowner is exempted from complying with municipal zoning laws. (Siddall, pers. int. 2013). Illustration 06 shows current zoning in the Capitol Complex, as well which parcels are owned by the state government. The State owns almost 60.5 of the roughly 67 acres included in the analysis. Many of the medium-rise office buildings in the area are on parcels zoned for multi-family residential. This zoning is almost certainly a vestige of the neighborhood as it was in the first half of the 20th century, before the state government acquired the land. A zoning analysis is helpful in understanding what administrative changes would need to occur should a parcel be sold to a private sector investor. Immunity from zoning laws is only in effect if the state government owns the land. Once the land passes into private ownership, the preexisting zoning comes back into effect. The Austin city council would have to approve any request for a zoning change.

The City of Austin's zoning scheme includes several 'overlay zones.' These are zoning categories that overlay a parcel's primary zoning classification and place additional restrictions on development. The 'Capitol Dominance' and 'Capitol View Corridor' overlay zones are highlighted in Illustration 06. The Capitol Dominance overlay zone restricts the size of buildings within a quarter-mile radius of the Capitol building in order to preserve its prominence over surrounding areas. The Capitol View Corridor overlay zoning limits the height of structures in order to preserve lines of sight leading to the Capitol dome from all over the city (Planning & Development Review Department, n.d.). Capitol View Corridor zoning may not cover an entire parcel, making it possible for a tall building to be permitted on one corner of the lot. It appears that although the State is exempt from zoning laws, state-owned buildings within the Capitol Complex follow the spirit of the Capitol View Corridor overlay. The tallest buildings in the Complex are constructed on parcels not covered by the overlay.

The current land uses and zoning regulations in the Capitol Complex support my argument that the area is mainly an office district with few other uses. The land uses in particular demonstrate the domination of offices and parking facilities. Zoning regulations in general do not apply to the Capitol Complex, although the State appears to have decided that protecting the grandeur of the Capitol building is important through following the spirit of the Capitol View Corridor overlay. The 'dormant' zoning in place in the Complex, activated upon acquisition of a parcel by a private investor, may prove to be contentious should parcels be sold. For instance, the State may sell a parcel to a developer hoping to build something not permitted by current zoning. The City is under no obligation to approve a change in zoning.

Pedestrian analysis

According to assessments by the website Walkscore.com, the Capitol Complex's Walk Score rating is a "very walkable" 77 out of 100 (Walk Score, n.d.). However, this number is deceptive. The score appears to be utilitarian in nature and based upon destination. The webpage states that "most errands [in the zone] can be accomplished on foot" (ibid.). However, sample destinations for pedestrians are erroneously or inappropriately categorized. For example, the office for the US Food and Drug Administration is categorized as a grocery store. The Capitol Grill is listed as a restaurant, despite its location in the basement of the State Capitol behind a security checkpoint. The Walk Score does not consider factors such as safety or condition of pedestrian infrastructure. Therefore, it should not be considered to be indicative of the area's walkability. Instead, a more holistic approach is appropriate when evaluating an area's walkability; the purpose of this chapter is to provide just that.

In order to assess walkability in the Capitol Complex, I decided that self-gathered data obtained through observation during site visits would work best. At this point I concluded that rather than focusing on every single block within the Complex, I would instead concentrate on two major streets in the area. I chose North Congress Avenue and San Jacinto Boulevard for several reasons. They are both oriented north-south. North Congress Avenue runs directly from the Capitol building to the UT Campus. San Jacinto Boulevard is an arterial street that carries traffic through the Capitol Complex. San Jacinto had always struck me as a very unpleasant street due to large parking garages. However, one of the Complex's few businesses is located along it. Walkability issues might particularly affect businesses negatively. While I understood that concentrating on only two streets would not demonstrate the full extent of walkability in the Capitol Complex, I felt that, given the limitations on my time and availability of resources, these two streets would be a good representation due to their status as principal corridors.

I began my walkability analysis by creating basic maps of each block along the two selected streets using GIS software. I included building footprints and tree canopy on the maps, as well as street centerlines. I used these maps for both a streetscape analysis (to be discussed later) and to create a pedestrian count form. Examples of these map documents are included as appendices to this report.

I decided that a pedestrian count would be the best way to confirm or deny my suspicions that pedestrian activity in the Capitol Complex was limited to the weekday, when workers were present. The count would also show where pedestrian activity was more concentrated. Some of the pedestrian counts in the literature were large endeavors conducted over multiple hours and counting thousands of pedestrians (City of Vancouver, 2009; Louisville Downtown Management District, 2012). Pedestrians were usually counted along the block. In Vancouver, pedestrians were counted mid-block when they

passed in front of the person counting. Two pedestrian counts in Austin counted pedestrians when they crossed an imaginary line extending out from the person doing the counting (Rodriguez, 2010; Sletto, 2009). The counts always took note of the weather, recognizing that pedestrian activity wanes when conditions are adverse.

I faced several limitations in my pedestrian count. I was limited to the number of intersections I could cover, and the amount of time I could spend. I decided to conduct the counts at four different intersections for 20 minute intervals. I was able to convince a few friends to help me out; in this way, we were able to conduct the counts more or less simultaneously. The counts took place on a Sunday and Tuesday at the lunch hour and in the evening to see whether or not pedestrian activity was influenced by day or hour. Since the Capitol Complex is heavily dominated by office uses, I thought that most pedestrians would be counted during the Tuesday lunch hour. The weather was fair during the counts, and there was no special event happening, leading me to believe that the results are typical of any other day. Because I thought pedestrians would be few and far between, I decided to conduct counts at intersections rather than the mid-block location favored in other counts. By doing so, I could maximize coverage. Pedestrians were only counted if they crossed the street or turned the corner at the intersection without crossing the street. A person jaywalking half a block away from the intersection would not be counted unless he/she eventually walked through the intersection.

The four intersections I chose are: 14th and Colorado; 15th and North Congress; 18th and North Congress; and 17th and San Jacinto. I deliberately chose three intersections that were along my chosen corridors. The fourth intersection would serve as a control because it is not located along either corridor, and it is located at an entry point to the Capitol grounds. Each intersection is located adjacent to what I considered to be a rare destination in the Capitol Complex. Specifically, 14th and Colorado is near restaurants on

Lavaca Street and at an entry gate to the Capitol building grounds. Fifteenth and North Congress is where vehicular access is restricted as it approaches the Capitol building. Eighteenth and North Congress is the location of the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, while 17th and San Jacinto is next to the Scholtz Garten, a bar/restaurant and one of the few private businesses in the complex.

The results of the pedestrian count confirmed my belief that the Capitol Complex is not an active place after normal business hours. Very few pedestrians were counted in the evenings, even at the intersection next to the bar/restaurant. It appeared that most patrons of this establishment were driving and parking right outside, meaning they walked no more than half a block to go inside. The most pedestrians were counted at the weekday lunch hour at 18th and North Congress. Persons passing through this intersection appeared to be a mixture of visitors to the Texas State History Museum and office workers on their lunch breaks. Weekend pedestrian activity included many joggers, who may represent a potential niche for targeting visitors to the area. The following illustration shows the results of the pedestrian counts.

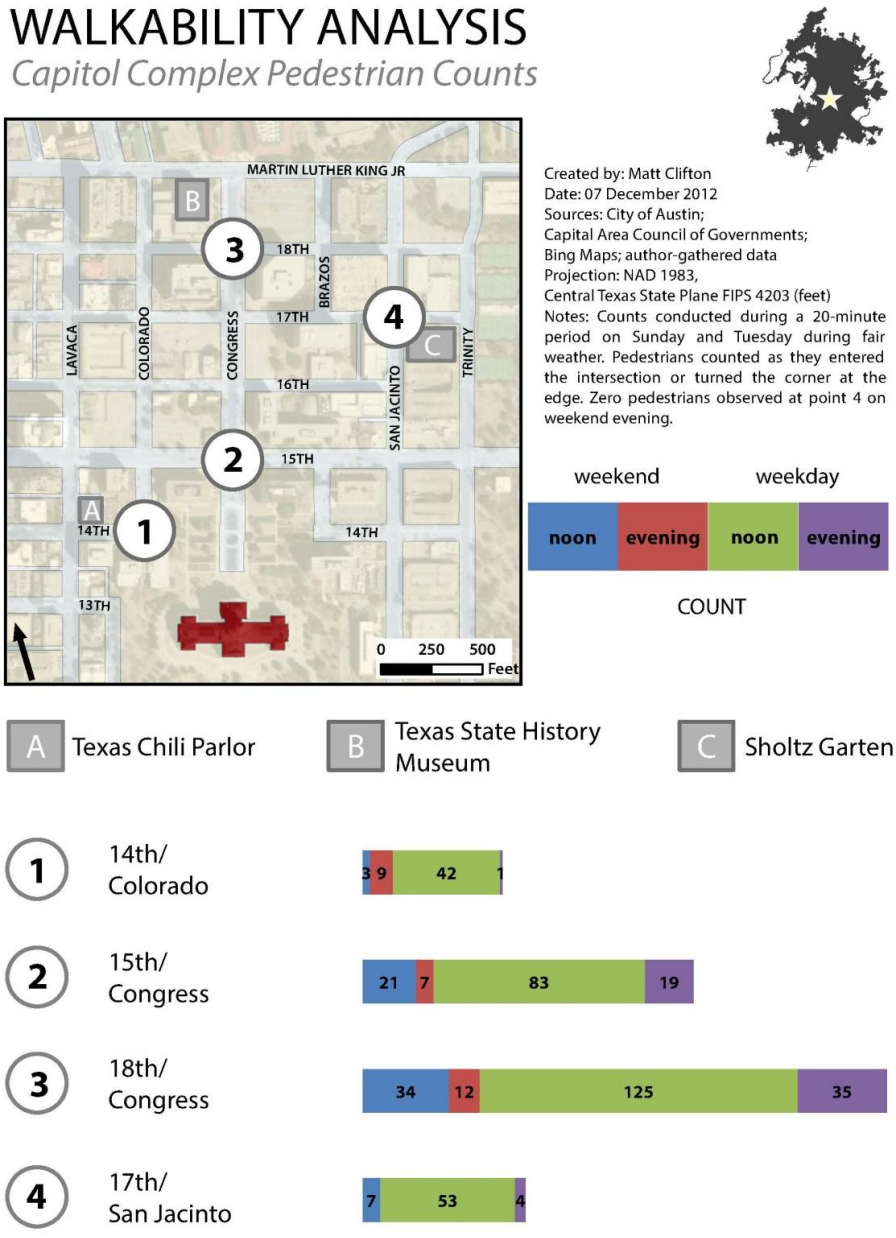


Illustration 3.4: Result of pedestrian counts in the Capitol Complex.

	WEEKEND NOON	WEEKEND EVENING	WEEKDAY NOON	WEEKDAY EVENING
14TH & COLORADO	3	9	42	1
15TH & CONGRESS	21	7	83	19
18TH & CONGRESS	34	12	125	35
17TH & SAN JACINTO	7	0	53	4

Table 3.1. Pedestrian count at four intersections.

Walkability analysis

It should be obvious from the previous chapters that the concept of 'walkability' has not been concretely defined. What makes a place 'walkable' will differ by author, organization, and individual pedestrian. In order to measure how walkable the Capitol Complex is, I had to create my own definition of walkability. For this study, I define 'walkability' as the aggregation of features of a place that provide a sense of safety, comfort, and activity to the pedestrian.

Ewing and Handy (2009) acknowledge the difficulty in precisely measuring walkability due to its subjective nature. Their study asked participants to rate environments for walkability based on imageability, enclosure, human scale, transparency, complexity, legibility, linkage, and coherence. I kept these categories in mind when coming up with my own, more abbreviated definition of walkability. Litman (2003) specifically mentions "safety, comfort, and convenience" as categories through which walkability can be analyzed (p. 3), specifically mentioning field surveys and GIS analysis as methods to measure walkability (p. 4).

My methodology was inspired in part by a checklist published by the Partnership for a Walkable America. The checklist is designed for members of the general public to

rate their own neighborhood's walkability by assigning a rating to their experiences as a pedestrian. However, the checklist focuses on the user's psychological state while walking (e.g. asking whether or not there were "scary people") more than I felt was appropriate for the scope of my analysis. I was interested more in making generalizations about the Capitol Complex's walkability to inform suggestions for improvements suited to the general public, not my own emotional needs.

I was also inspired in part by the New Zealand Public Open Space Tool described in Badland, Kearn, Witten, & Kearns (2010). This instrument is used to audit outdoor public spaces for features conducive to encouraging people to spend time there. The tool breaks general categories (e.g. 'environmental quality') into observable features (e.g. 'shade along paths') and provides a scoring schematic for each. I decided to use a similar approach to counting and rating features of walkability.

I decided to concentrate mostly on physical and quantifiable aspects of the streetscape, since things like benches and tree canopy were easy to define and mark down as present or absent. I used other physical attributes as proxies for less tangible aspects of walkability, such as a sense of security. For example, traffic calming features like four-way stops and traffic signals at junctions make it safer for pedestrians to cross streets. On the other hand, curb cuts (places where vehicles drive over the sidewalk to access lots or garages) create zones where pedestrians feel vulnerable. These features can be counted and serve as proxies for pedestrians' likely emotional or psychological state when negotiating a streetscape.

During site visits I walked each block of San Jacinto Boulevard and North Congress Avenue, documenting what pedestrian amenities I encountered. I also noted traffic control devices and made note of any discrepancy between the GIS files of the tree canopy and building footprints and what I actually observed. Below are the features I

noted during my analysis. I have separated them according to each of the three facets of walkability according to my definition.

Safety

Street Lighting: Especially in the city, walking around in the dark heightens a sense of danger. Not only are pedestrians less visible to passing cars, but the inability to observe what is going on around you can increase the likelihood of crimes against person and property.

Marked crosswalks: Painted lines across the street serve as a warning for motorists to anticipate pedestrian traffic. They mark a boundary for pedestrians on territory normally reserved for cars.

Traffic signalization: Stop signs and traffic lights prevent cars from careening quickly down streets. Motorists who are forced to apply brakes will not be able to build up much speed, making pedestrians feel safer. Traffic signalization also creates breaks for pedestrians to cross the road. I viewed traffic lights and four-way stops to be better for fostering walkability than simple one street priority/one street yield stop sign schemes (i.e. 'two-way stop').

Physical separation from the street: Pedestrians feel uneasy walking flush with active lanes of traffic. Vegetation or rows of cars parked parallel create a 'wall' between people and traffic. The psychological and physical barrier makes a walker feel less likely that he/she will be struck by a passing car.

Comfort

Sidewalk: Obvious necessities in any walkable urban area, sidewalks are the realm of the pedestrian. Their level surface makes walking easier than bare ground. There

is no awkward sharing of space with cars as there would be if pedestrians are forced to walk on the hard shoulder (except in the case of curb cuts; see below).

Curb cuts: These are places where cars drive over the sidewalk. They are particularly unnerving if leading out of a parking garage, where a driver's visibility of pedestrians may be limited. Too many curb cuts along a block make provision of a sidewalk seem futile, as the threat of car traffic crossing over is constant. I considered more than two curb cuts per block to be excessive.

Tree canopy: Especially necessary in Austin's brutal summer heat, tree canopies create welcome shade and also provide a sense of scale.

Setback/scale of surrounding buildings: Buildings wildly out-of-proportion with their surroundings disrupt the scale of an area. Similarly, buildings flush with the sidewalk that rise straight up for multiple stories lend an unpleasant sense of confinement to a block. I used my subjective judgment to determine whether or not a building was of proper setback and scale. The many multi-story car parks in the Complex were usually not setback from the sidewalk and were very imposing.

Benches: As well as providing a place to sit down and rest for a while, benches also encourage alternative pedestrian activities, such a reading, talking, and people watching. Benches encourage people to spend a little more time in the area than they would otherwise. The presence of other pedestrians contributes to the feeling that there are 'eyes on the street,' keeping it safe (Jacobs, 1961, p. 161; Reid, 2008, p. 106).

Bus shelters: No one wants to wait for a bus in the rain or fully exposed to the hot Texas sun. Bus shelters supplement walkability because they offer access to alternative modes of transportation that are complementary to walking.

Trash bins: A proper place to dispose of garbage helps to keep sidewalks free of litter. Clean streets can enhance a pedestrian's impression of a neighborhood.

Activity

Destination: Some people walk purely for exercise, but in an urban setting pedestrians are most likely using their feet to get somewhere. A neighborhood without destinations that are interesting and attractive may result in an absence of pedestrians. Given the monocentric nature of Capitol Complex activities, I considered a restaurant or a museum to be a 'destination.' I did not consider an office building to be a 'destination' because this type of place is unlikely to be left unvisited whether or not a neighborhood is walkable. People will go to their jobs no matter what.

Other pedestrians: The presence of other people gives the impression that there are 'eyes on the street' (Jacobs, 1961). This can have the effect of deterring crime or lessening a sense of danger. I quantified this category through the pedestrian counts.

SAFETY (EMOTIONAL)	COMFORT (PHYSICAL)	ACTIVITY (PSYCHOLOGICAL)
• street lighting • crosswalks • traffic signalization • separation from traffic	• sidewalk • minimal curb cuts • tree canopy • surrounding buildings • benches • bus shelters • trash bins	• other pedestrians • destinations

Table 3.2. Components of a walkable environment.

Walkability analysis findings

The following illustrations present the results of the walkability analysis. I assigned dummy variables to account for the presence or absence of a component of a walkable environment (see Table 3.2). I then entered the information into a spreadsheet

and calculated a score for each block, with 1 indicating a completely unwalkable block, and 10 indicating a very walkable block. I had to normalize (mathematically adjust values on differing scales to a common scale) the scores because some blocks had bus stops while others did not. The presence of a bus stop with a shelter would have had an advantage in scoring over a block without a stop had I not normalized all scores. I considered both sides of the street when evaluating each block as a whole, instead of breaking each block into two separate units.

North Congress Avenue

Congress Avenue is Austin's main street. Its path is interrupted by the Capitol Building. South of the rotunda, Congress Avenue runs for miles. North of the rotunda, its course is only 4 blocks. This section is labeled 'North Congress Avenue.' I analyzed every block of North Congress Avenue for the walkability study. Walking south from UT towards the Capitol, the pedestrian enjoys a view of the Capitol dome. The analysis found that North Congress Avenue was on the whole more walkable than San Jacinto Boulevard. The average walkability score for all blocks was 7.3 out of 10.

1500 North Congress

This block is at the southern end of North Congress Avenue and the closest to the Capitol building. The block's walkability score is 8.2, making it the second most walkable block in the analysis. Positive features are a trash bin, some tree canopy, and minimal curb cuts. Traffic is stopped by a traffic light. However, there are no benches.

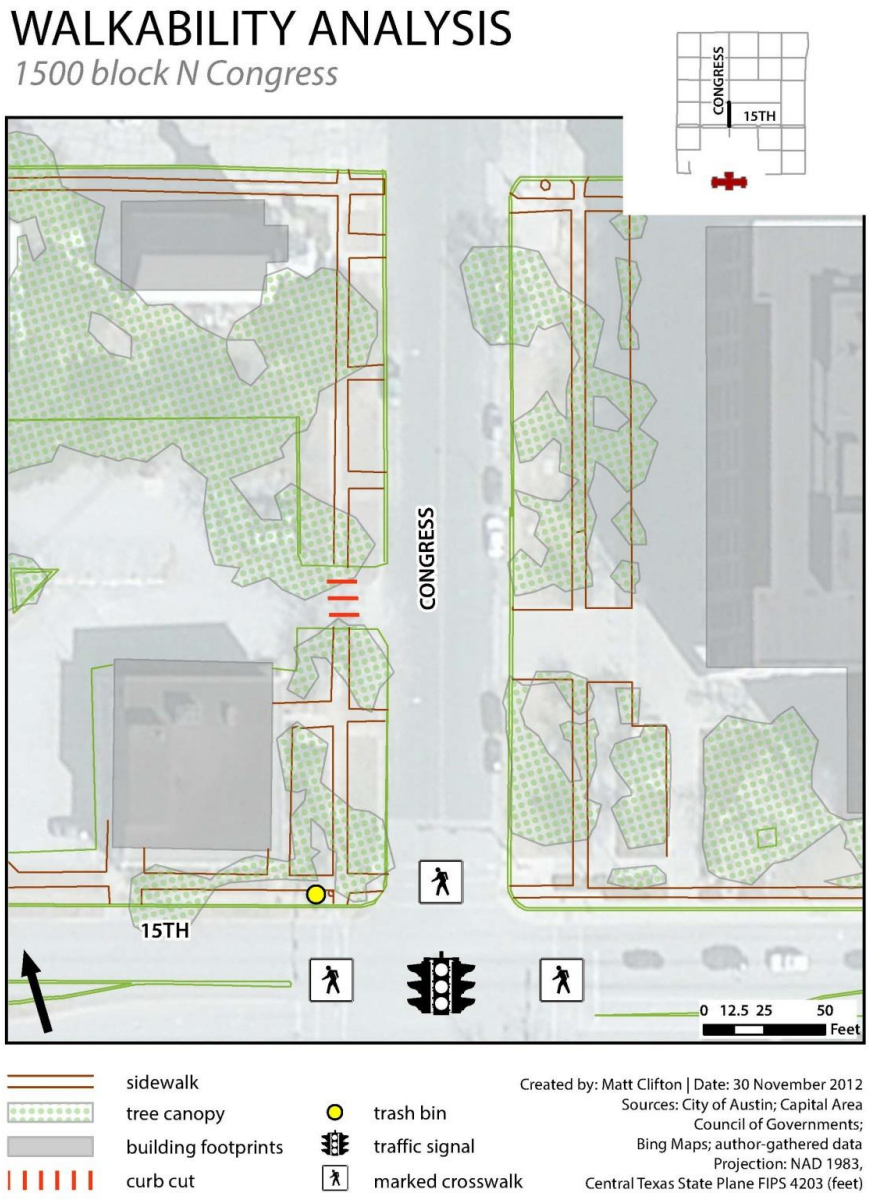


Illustration 3.5: Streetscape inventory for the 1500 block of North Congress Avenue.

1600 North Congress

This block tied for least walkable, receiving a score of 4.2. The sidewalk on the east side of the block is very far from the edge of the street: so far, in fact, that there was evidence that pedestrians are walking through the grass where a sidewalk would normally be expected. Physical separation from the street is desirable, but in my opinion this sidewalk was too far away from the curb. To make matters worse, the sidewalk is flush with the edge of a parking lot without a curb or any sort of barrier between a car lane and walkers.

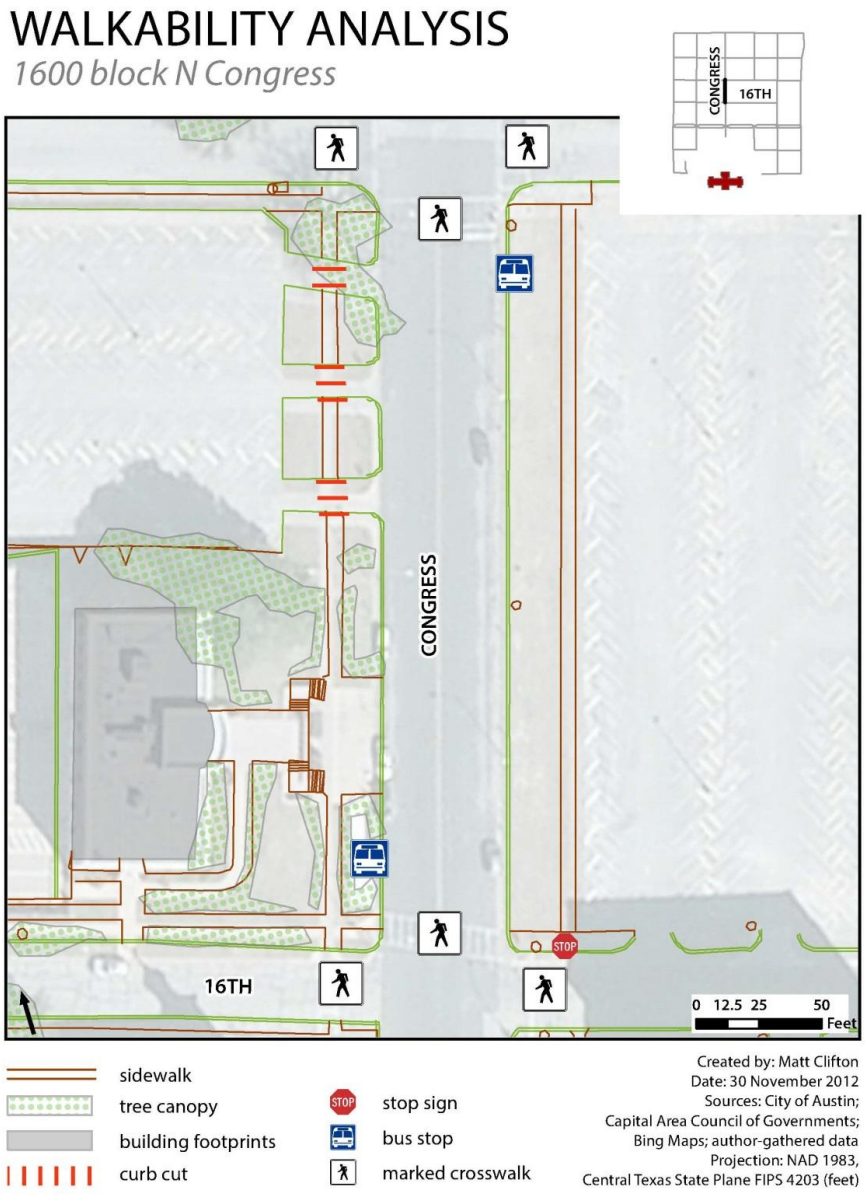


Illustration 3.6: Streetscape inventory for the 1600 block of North Congress Avenue.

1700 North Congress

This block scored a 7.9, making it the 3rd most walkable. This block has a lot of potential, but falls short in being a paragon of walkability. There is a bus stop without a bench, and only partial tree canopy. The buildings along the block are enormous mid-rises, but they are set back far enough from the street so as not to egregiously offend a sense of scale. There are many benches, and sidewalks are mostly shaded.

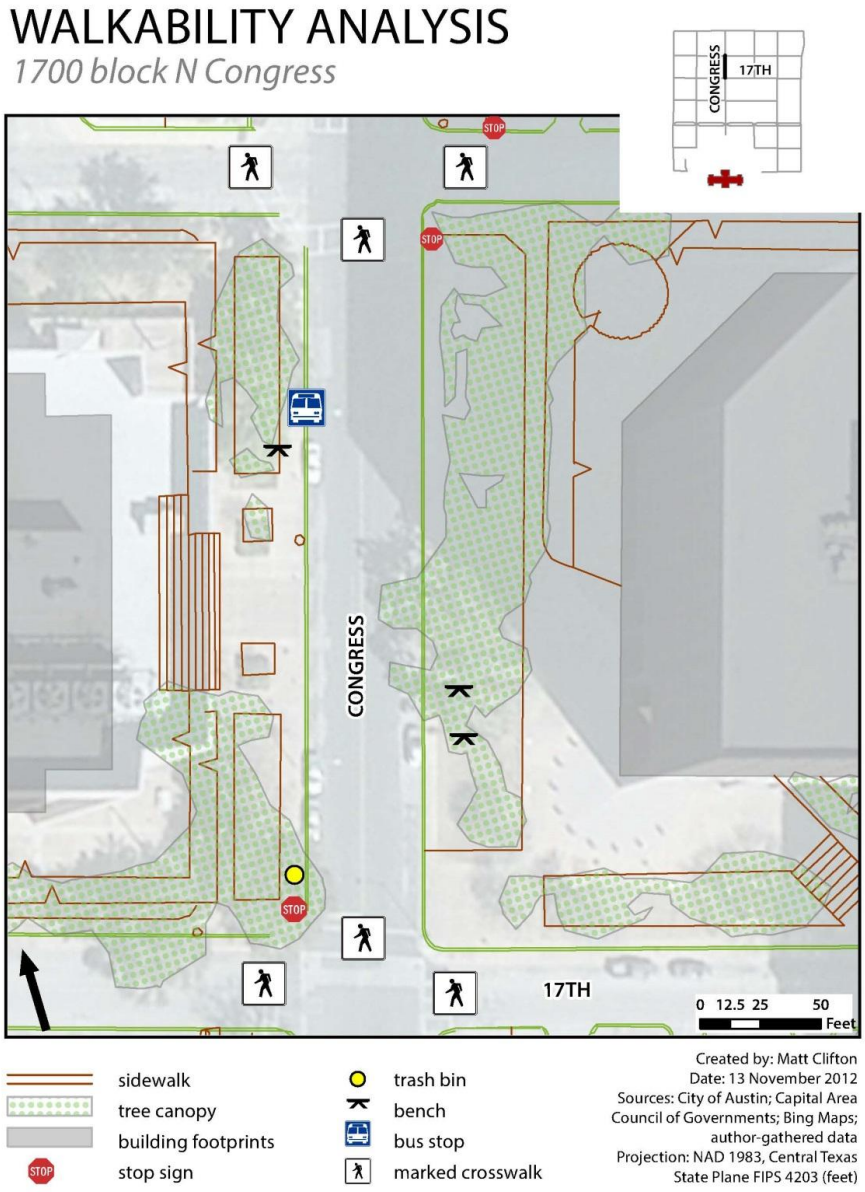


Illustration 3.7: Streetscape inventory for the 1700 block of North Congress Avenue.

1800 North Congress

This block scored a 9.0 and was the most walkable in the analysis. One of the Capitol Complex's few destinations is here: the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum. The bus stop has a shelter, but the tree canopy is limited. Similar to the 1600 block, the sidewalk on the east side of this block is up against a parking lot and not near the curb. This block was the site of a pedestrian count and featured the highest total of persons counted, probably due to the presence of the museum. The University of Texas and the Blanton Museum of Art are directly across MLK, Jr. Boulevard.

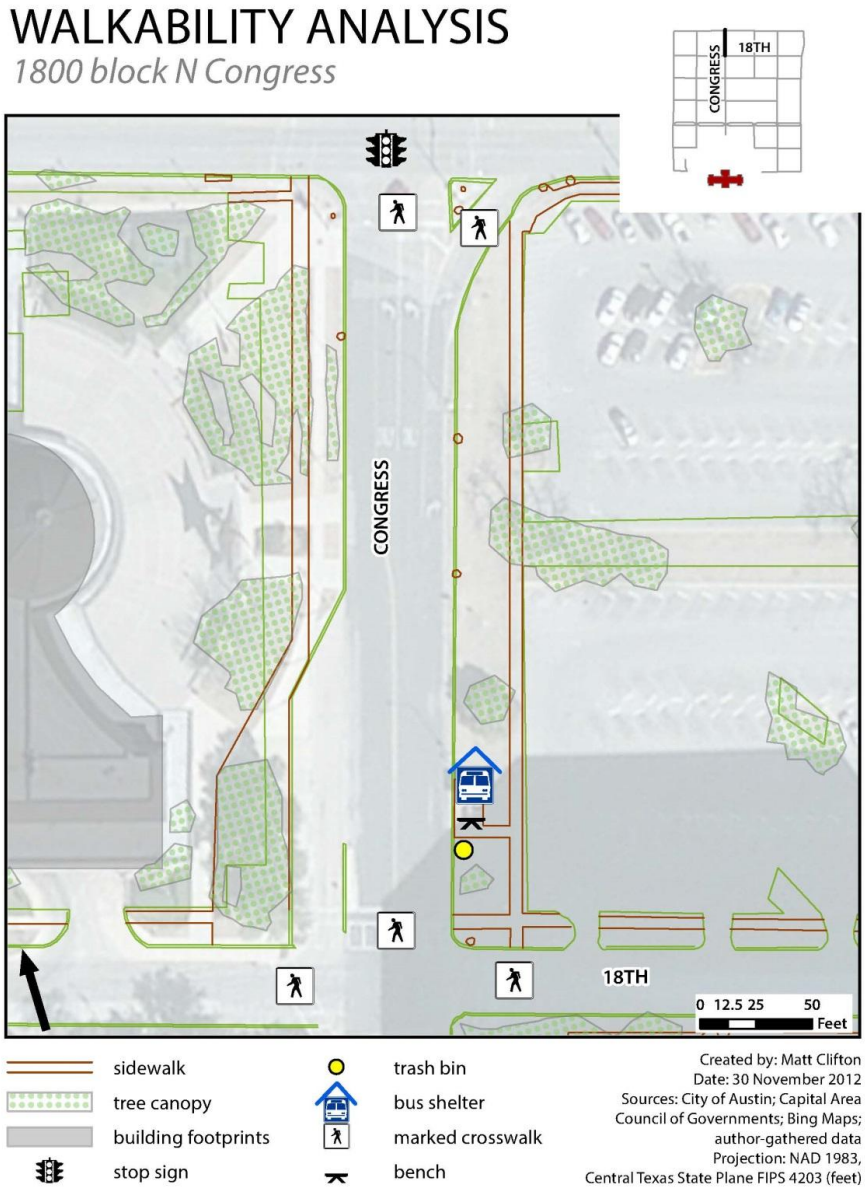


Illustration 3.8: Streetscape inventory for the 1800 block of North Congress Avenue.

San Jacinto Boulevard

San Jacinto Boulevard is a minor arterial street connecting the University of Texas campus with downtown Austin. In the Capitol Complex, the street carries one-way traffic southbound. The street runs uninterrupted through the area, unlike Congress Avenue. As a result, public bus routes use the street. There is also a bicycle lane. Presumably because the street is a minor arterial, many of the Complex's parking garages are located along San Jacinto Boulevard. Their looming, concrete-heavy presence helped to make San Jacinto less walkable than North Congress Avenue. The average walkability score for the San Jacinto blocks was 5.4 out of 10. A total of six blocks were analyzed.

Illustration 3.9: Facing north on San Jacinto Boulevard from 13th Street. (Photo by the author.)

1300 San Jacinto

This block was on the lower end of walkability (7th place) with a score of 5.4. Parking facilities line the eastern side, while a tall hedge on the western side obstructs, perhaps mercifully, views of large district heating and cooling machinery. There is little tree canopy. On the northeast corner of 13th and San Jacinto is a nitrogen tank chained to the ground (see Illustration 3.10). To add insult to injury, the tank is located where the crosswalk reaches

the curb, and is next to a sign warning motorists of blind pedestrians. The tank is a public safety hazard, not only to blind pedestrians but also to motorists who might crash into it. It should be removed immediately.

Illustration 3.10: Hazard to pedestrians at 13th & San Jacinto. (Photo by the author.)

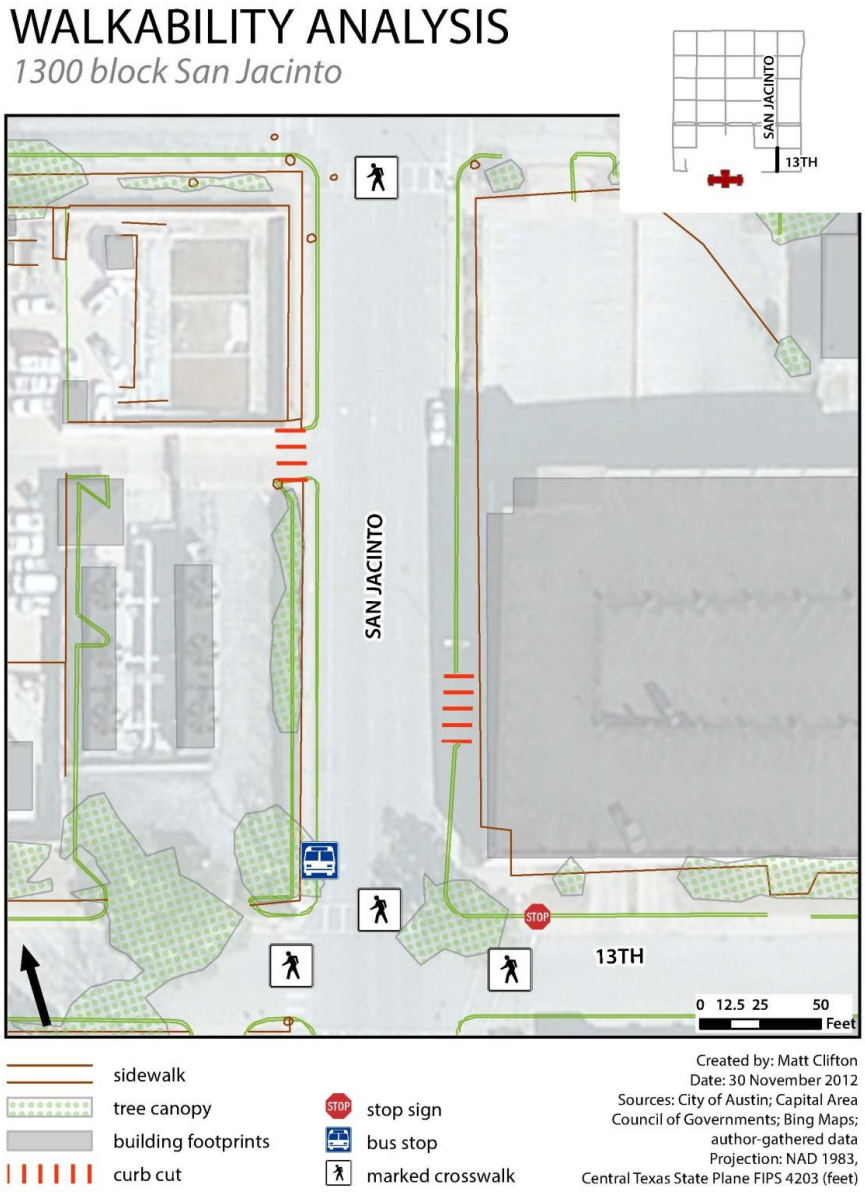


Illustration 3.11: Streetscape inventory for the 1300 block of San Jacinto Boulevard.

1400 San Jacinto

This block was similar to the 1300 block with a score of 5.6. A parking garage flanks the east side, while a blank wall flush with the sidewalk with several garage doors lines the entire western side. There is almost no tree canopy.

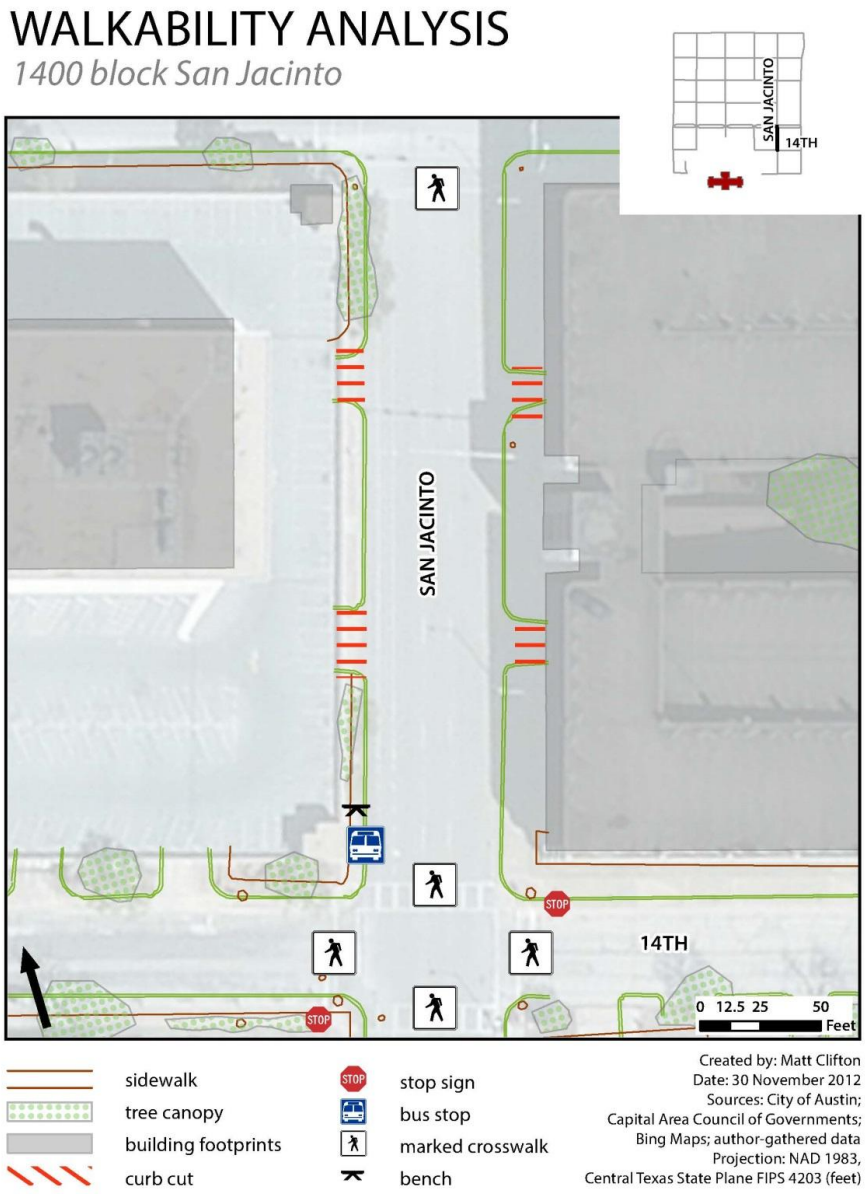


Illustration 3.12: Streetscape inventory for the 1400 block of San Jacinto Boulevard.

1500 San Jacinto

This block tied for the least walkable with a score of 4.2. The historic, disused gas station on the corner of 15th and San Jacinto is a rare example of a visually appealing property in the Complex. However, it is currently vacant and was recently sold by the State to a private investor. The rest of the western side is occupied by an alleyway and a parking garage. The eastern side features another parking garage and a surface lot partially enclosed by a fence topped with barbed-wire. This does not create a welcoming environment nor does it inspire a sense of security in the mind of the pedestrian.

Illustration 3.13: Vestige of the Capitol Complex's past, now for lease by a private landowner. (Photo by the author.)

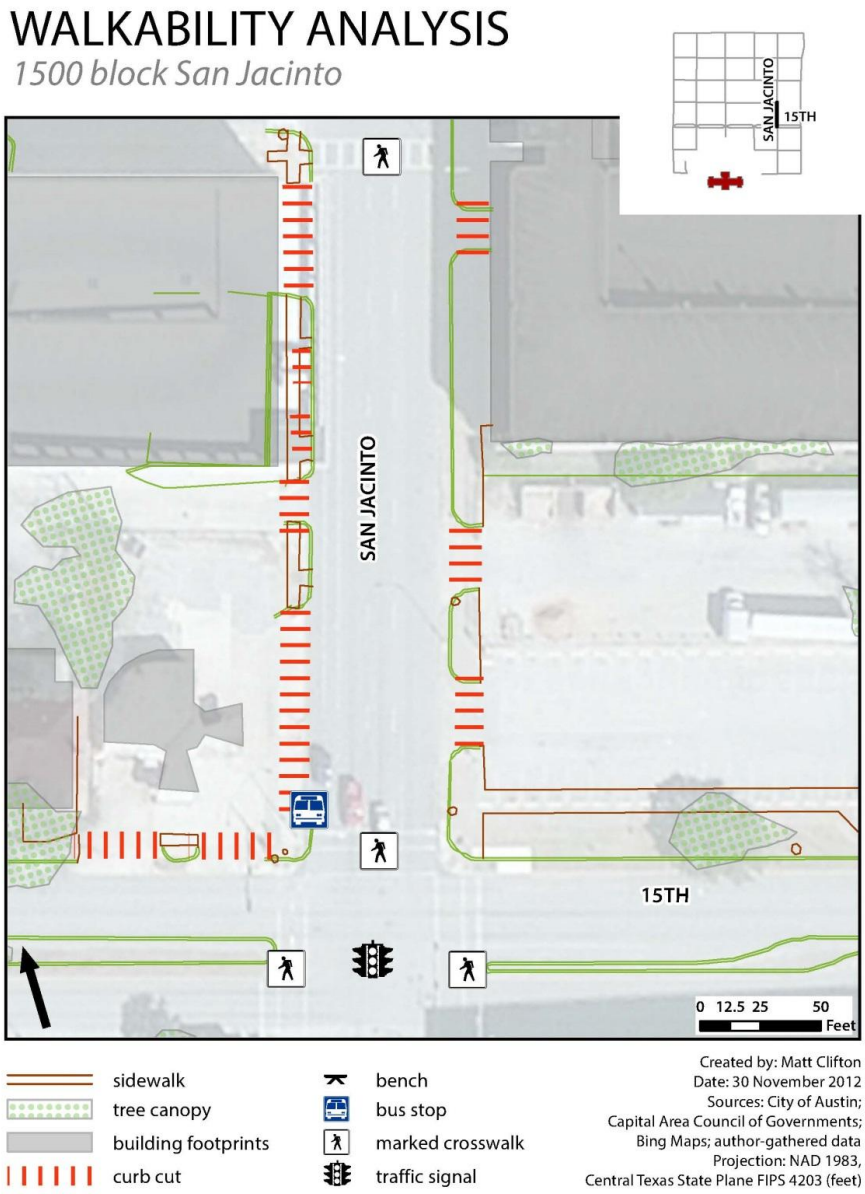


Illustration 3.14: Streetscape inventory for the 1500 block of San Jacinto Boulevard.

1600 San Jacinto

This block was in the middle of the pack in terms of walkability, with a score of 5.7. The block contains the historic Sholtz Garten, a bar/restaurant that is one of the few commercial establishments in the Capitol Complex, and the only one along San Jacinto. The charm of the old building it occupies is lessened by the large parking garage that is built up against one side. The western side of the block is entirely filled by another large parking garage that rises up several stories straight off of the sidewalk. There are numerous curb cuts providing vehicular access to the garage. There is no tree canopy on the western side and nothing to shelter pedestrians from the elements.

Illustration 3.15: One of the many parking garages in the Capitol Complex, 1600 block San Jacinto. (Photo by the author.)

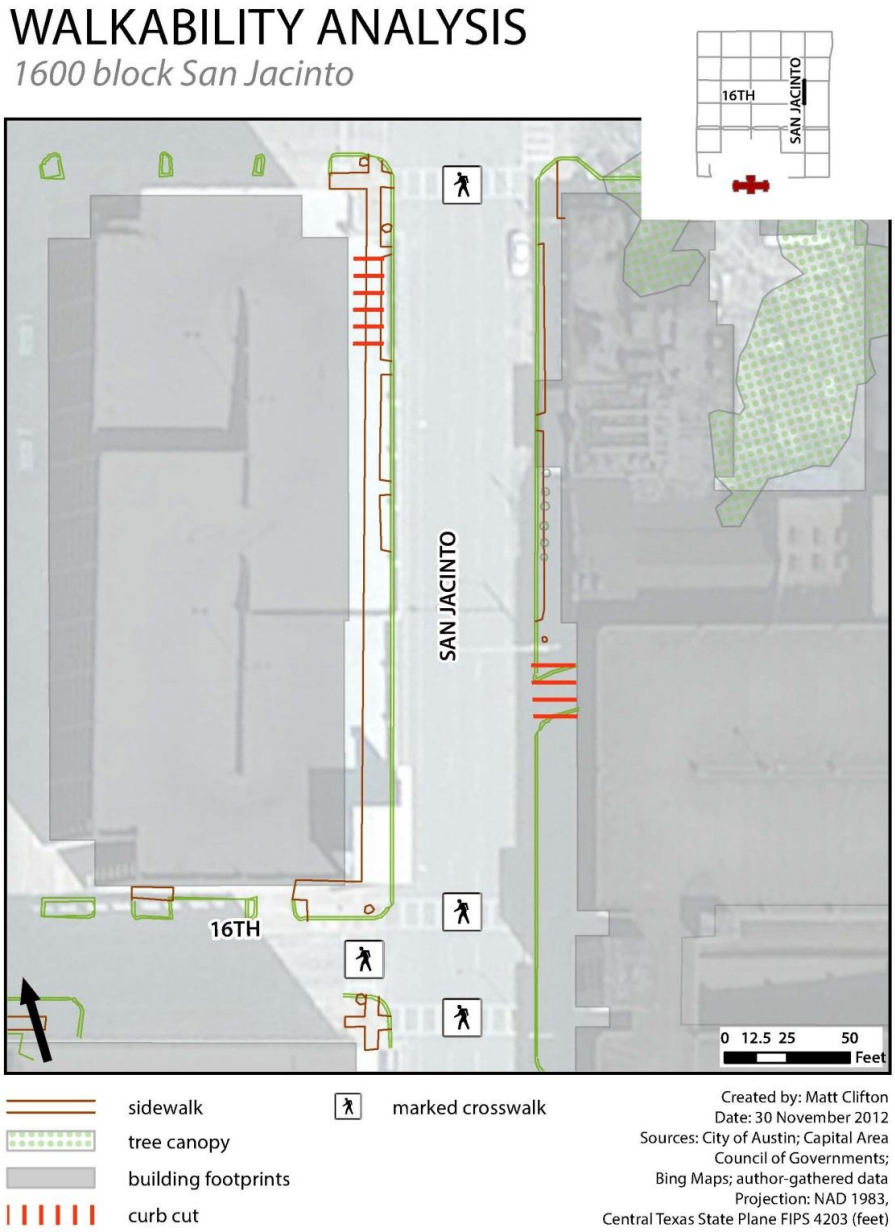


Illustration 3.16: Streetscape inventory for the 1600 block of San Jacinto Boulevard.

1700 San Jacinto

This block has the dubious honor of being the penultimate least-walkable block, with a score of 5.0 A parking garage takes up the entire western side, while a more human-scale building sits back from the sidewalk on the eastern side. There is no tree canopy, although there is some landscaping in front of the building on the eastern side.

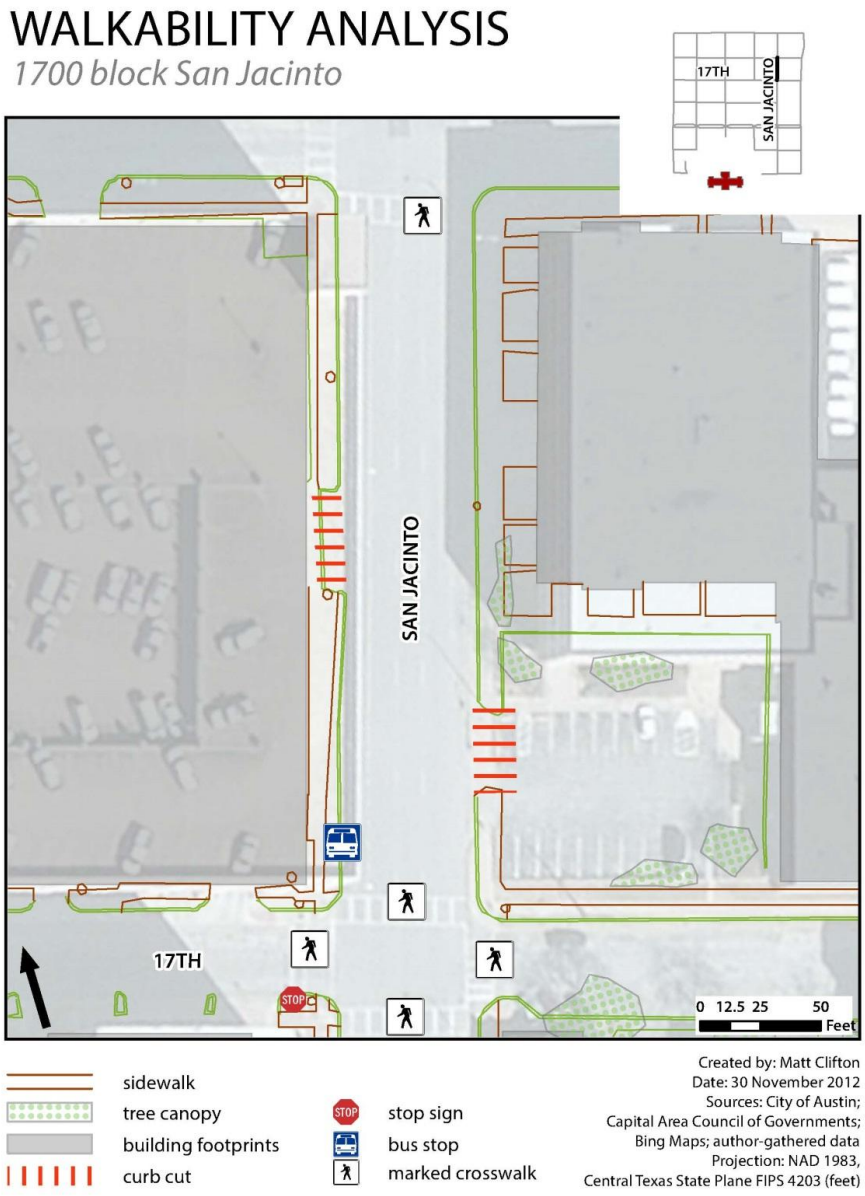


Illustration 3.17: Streetscape inventory for the 1700 block of San Jacinto Boulevard.

1800 San Jacinto

This block was the most walkable of all the San Jacinto blocks, with a score of 6.3. There is limited tree canopy, but there are benches, trash bins, and the building on the western side is set back from the sidewalk. A hedge blocks the view of the building parking lot from the sidewalk. The western side is occupied by a surface parking lot. There are numerous curb cuts, although many are not in use, blocked by parallel-parked cars and parking meters.

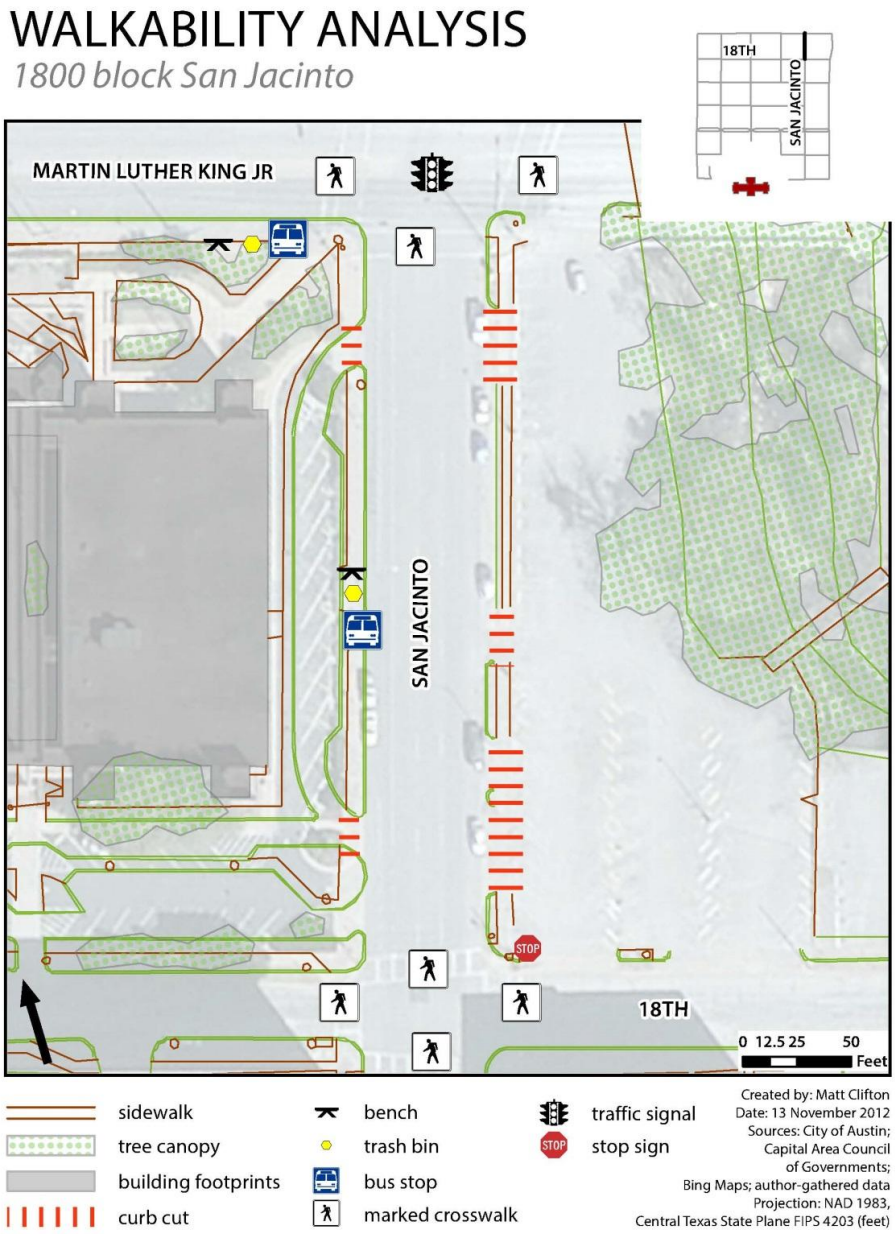


Illustration 3.18: Streetscape inventory for the 1800 block of San Jacinto Boulevard.

The following table contains an image of the spreadsheet used to score each block. The columns on the right detail the scoring scheme I utilized to calculate the individual block's walkability score and ranking amongst all block analyzed.

STREET		NORTH CONGRESS				SAN JACINTO						SCORING
BLOCK		1500	1600	1700	1800	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	
FEATURES												
	SAFETY (emotional)											
	street lighting	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Y = 1; N = 0
	crosswalk	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Y = 1; N = 0
	signalization	1.00	0.50	1.00	1.00	0.50	0.50	1.00	0.00	0.50	0.50	traffic signal/4-way stop = 1; stop sign on one street = 0.5; no signal = 0
	separation from street	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	separation (parked cars; vegetation) = 1; no separation = 0
	COMFORT (physical)											
	sidewalk	1.00	0.50	1.00	0.50	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Y = 1; Y but not flush with curb = 0.5; N = 0
	number of curb cuts	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0-2 = 1; >2 = 0
	tree canopy	1.00	0.00	0.50	0.25	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	substantial = 1; partial = 0.5; none = 0
	surrounding buildings	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.50	1.00	appropriate setback/size = 1; inappropriate setback/scale = 0
	benches	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	Y = 1; N = 0
	bus shelters (if there is a stop)		0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	Y = 1; N = 0
	trash bins	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	Y = 1; N = 0
	ACTIVITY (psychological)											
	pedestrian count (weekday)	83			125					53		
	pedestrian count (weeknight)	19			35					4		
	pedestrian count (wkend)	21			34					7		
	pedestrian count (wkend night)	7			12					0		
	attractions	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	museum/restaurant = 1; parking/offices/none = 0
TOTAL RAW SCORE		9.00	5.00	9.50	10.75	6.50	6.75	5.00	6.25	6.00	7.50	
TOTAL SCORE (NORMALIZED)		8.2	4.2	7.9	9.0	5.4	5.6	4.2	5.7	5.0	6.3	
RANK		*2*	*9*	*3*	*1*	*7*	*6*	*9*	*5*	*8*	*4*	
SEGMENT_ID		2018125	2018047	2017984	2017917	3373940	2018230	2018158	2018099	2018034	2017964	
NB: Pedestrian counts do not factor into score.												

Table 3.3: Spreadsheet used to score individual blocks

The following table presents characteristics of blocks according to their walkability.

UNWALKABLE	WALKABLE	VERY WALKABLE
• no sidewalk • dark streets at night • no crosswalks • no traffic-calming devices or signalization • sidewalk flush with traffic lanes • numerous, wide curb cuts • no shade or tree canopy • massive buildings with little setback from street • no places to sit • no seating at bus stops • no 'eyes on the street' • no attractions/destinations	• sidewalk • street lighting • marked crosswalks • 4-way stop at junctions • sidewalk separated from traffic, either by landscaping or parked cars • minimal curb cuts • shade from buildings or trees • various building scales • benches • bus stops with seating • other pedestrians • some attractions/destinations	• wide sidewalks • pedestrian-scaled lighting • signal-controlled crossings • sidewalk separated from traffic • no curb cuts • limited exposure to elements through awnings or tree canopy

Table 3.4: Characteristics of blocks according to their assessed quality of walkability.

The following figure is a map showing each block's walkability on a color ramp. A red line indicates a less walkable block. A green line indicates a more walkable block.

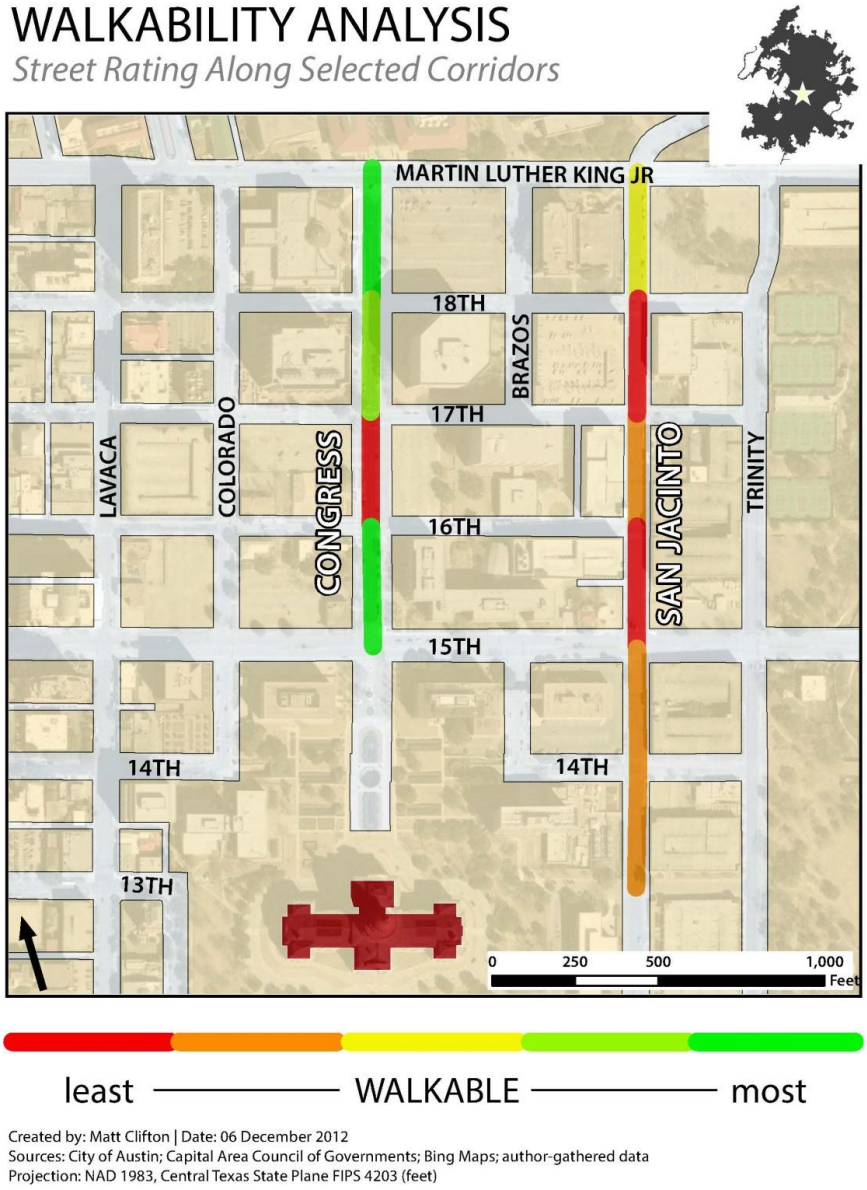


Illustration 3.19: Map showing walkability of each analyzed block, according to walkability score.

Summary of findings

The pedestrian and walkability analyses presented above suggest that the Capitol Complex is not a walkable environment. Although basic pedestrian infrastructure exists, the zone lacks sufficient features to encourage walking. Instead, wide streets and one-way traffic patterns serve to rush cars into and out of the area at peak times. Due to its location between downtown Austin and the University of Texas campus, one would expect a high level of pedestrian activity. However, this is not the case. There are few destinations of their own right within the Capitol Complex to invite people from neighboring districts to venture within on foot. There is nothing interesting to look at, unless one is particularly interested in mid-century office building architecture. The lack of 24-hour activity (or even activity slightly beyond normal working hours) may give the impression that the area is unsafe at night, further discouraging pedestrians. The physical infrastructure of the streetscape in portions of the zone is threatening to pedestrians. The numerous curb cuts leading into and out of parking lots and garages create uncomfortable spaces for those on foot, especially along San Jacinto Boulevard. A lack of amenities like benches and shade trees coupled with the massive scale of buildings makes the Complex feel like a place not meant for people. The hot climate of Central Texas makes it all the more important to pay attention to pedestrian comfort. Otherwise, people will simply dash from air-conditioned vehicles to air-conditioned offices.

North Congress Avenue is more walkable than San Jacinto Boulevard. However, both corridors suffer from similar challenges to being more walkable. Curb cuts are plentiful along both streets, resulting in a psychological threat to the safety of pedestrians. There are few benches, which would be especially appropriate in conjunction with the numerous bus stops in the corridor.

The San Jacinto corridor is characterized by block after block of monotonous parking garages, blank walls, and exposure to the elements. In contrast, North Congress Avenue contains more surface parking lots and a few idiosyncratic sidewalks that veer far away from the street. Both corridors have few 'destinations;' the Sholtz Garten and the Texas State History Museum are two notable exceptions.

The Capitol Complex currently stands out in stark contrast from surrounding neighborhoods. Compared to the rest of downtown Austin and the University of Texas campus, activity and attraction are noticeably absent from the Capitol Complex. This is especially true in the evening and on weekends, when the thousands of employees housed in state office buildings have gone home. The zone's mono-centric purpose hinders diversity of activity and precludes any 'vernacular culture.' Decades of uncoordinated plans coupled with land use that is singularly-focused have created a 'non-place' in the heart of central Austin.

The next chapter will present recommendations that can help to ensure that redevelopment in the Capitol Complex ameliorates some of the walkability problems identified in this chapter, as well as suggestions to improve a sense of "place" for the area. Redevelopment is not solely a State of Texas endeavor, for there are far more stakeholders than state government.

Chapter 4: Recommendations

The Capitol Complex is at a crucial juncture in its relatively short history. Urban redevelopment is occurring at a quick pace all around the area. The completion of numerous projects in the central business district means that entire city blocks necessary for large-scale construction are no longer available to developers. The neighborhoods surrounding the University of Texas campus, especially the area known as West Campus, are abuzz with new construction. Voters in the Austin area approved a bond measure in 2012 to fund a new medical school, which is likely to be located on the University of Texas campus just to the northwest of the Capitol Complex. All of these factors make Capitol Complex land ever the more valuable. If approached wisely, the State of Texas stands to gain substantial "non-tax revenues" from the redevelopment of underutilized parcels in the Complex, as well as ending a costly trend of leasing office space to house government employees (Dukes, pers. int. 2013). It seems inevitable that *something* in the form of new construction will take shape in the area. The question is how quickly consensus amongst the various direct stakeholders in the Complex will occur, and of course, what that new development will look like.

This chapter presents recommendations both from an urban planning/design perspective and an urban policy perspective. The recommendations are my own and were inspired from the walkability analysis detailed in Chapter 3 as well as from information gleaned from reading various news media reports, official documents and reports, and interviewing state and city officials. These recommendations are not meant to be a panacea for the shortcomings of the Capitol Complex or for the apparent lack of cohesion surrounding redevelopment activities. Rather, the recommendations (especially those relating to walkability and placemaking) are meant to contribute to the discussion of

where to go from here. Recommendations relating to the built environment may be done in anticipation of redevelopment to attract investor interest, or simultaneously with new construction.

The following recommendations apply to making the Capitol Complex a more walkable 'place.' They focus on changes to the built environment and streetscape. These recommendations will help to create a more interesting and accommodating environment for visitors, office workers, and future residents alike.

Walkability recommendations

The Capitol Complex, like the State Capitol building, belongs to all Texans, and redevelopment should attempt to capitalize on Texan identity. The revered, romanticized, and celebrated history of the state coupled with a healthy sense of state pride and recognition of Texas' unique culture presents a good opportunity for placemaking in the Capitol Complex. The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum already houses an impressive collection of items significant to Texas history and culture and can serve as the anchor for a comprehensive Texas theme that can reverberate through the Capitol Complex. The next few paragraphs provide concrete examples on how to carry the theme into placemaking and walkability.

The fact that the State Capitol and the UT campus are 'destinations' in their own right should not be overlooked when planning walkability improvements in the Capitol Complex. Drawing people from both of these places and into the Capitol Complex is the challenge. The 'Museum District' at North Congress Avenue and MLK, Jr., Boulevard was mentioned in many newspaper articles and in personal interviews. This is a nascent destination area and can serve as a draw for pedestrians from both UT and the State Capitol.

One feature of the Austin streetscape that can be found in many neighborhoods is the wall mural. Many Austin wall murals have reached near iconic status and can be found replicated on everything from t-shirts to postcards. The 'Greetings from Austin' mural at West Annie Street and South First Street and the 'Hi How Are You?' frog graffiti at Guadalupe Street and 21st Street are charming neighborhood features. Many of the buildings in the Capitol Complex are visually unexciting. There are many instances of blank concrete walls that could host wall murals. The murals could communicate an event of Texas history, or some other Texas theme, while breaking the monotony of the office buildings.

Examples of public installations capitalizing on state identity or imagery include plaques embedded in the sidewalk at the Capitol Mall in Salem, Oregon, which contain information about the state's counties. Similarly, Arizona installed educational signage along a street leading to the state capitol featuring information about the state's counties. The Iowa Capitol Complex includes a giant map of the state set into a pedestrian plaza. A similar map of Texas could be built into a pedestrian plaza in the Capitol Complex. The map could also be turned into a serial walk similar to the Oregon and Arizona examples, where several maps of Texas are set into the sidewalk at points around the Capitol Complex. Each map could display some different information about Texas, such as hydrology, geology, county boundaries, etc.

Drawing pedestrians into the Capitol Complex from the State Capitol and UT campus will require some sort of wayfinding system, since people are less likely to choose to walk somewhere if they feel as though they might become lost. Wayfinding design "provides guidance and the means to help people feel at ease in their surroundings" (Gibson, 2009, p. 12) by including a variety of thematic signs providing directions and distances at street level. Wayfinding signs can also make pedestrians

aware of destinations they did not know about and also help to create a visual identity for a place. The City of Austin is currently working on a wayfinding scheme for downtown (Merje, 2012), but the Capitol Complex would also be well-served by a wayfinding system, given the number of tourists who visit the area to see the Capitol and the relative anonymity of the buildings. There does not appear to be any sort of comprehensive wayfinding scheme currently, although the picture below shows some relatively inconspicuous, uninspired signage along San Jacinto Boulevard partly obscured by landscaping.

Illustration 4.1: The only example of wayfinding I observed in the Capitol Complex. (Photo by the author.)

Street furniture and other basic amenities for pedestrians are in short supply in the Capitol Complex. There are few features to shelter pedestrians from the elements, in particular the brutal summer Texas sun. San Jacinto Boulevard in particular has an oven-like feel to it on hot days as there is very little shade and heat radiates off of concrete building facades. Therefore, large-scale tree planting should be planned for the Capitol Complex, especially in areas where the sidewalks are wide and removing some pavement for a tree would not disrupt walking.

There are few places for pedestrians to stop and rest in the Capitol Complex. The placement of benches along more blocks, coupled with shade trees, can encourage people to sit and linger for a moment. Their presence provides 'eyes on the street' and also creates the impression of human activity. Similarly, few of the bus stops in the Capitol Complex have benches. Instead, passengers must lean against buildings or sit on the ground if they want to temporarily rest while waiting. Bus stops should include a bench at least. A shelter like the one at North Congress and 17th Street will provide a shaded place to sit and should be considered for more heavily-used stops or those near tourist destinations.

Illustration 4.2: Example of landscaping and provision of pedestrian amenities at 17th and Brazos Streets that should be replicated across the Capitol Complex. (Photo by the author.)

At the corner of Brazos Street and 17th Street is a small, park-like area with a gravel path, plenty of shade, and benches. This area is a rare example of a place in the Capitol Complex where a pedestrian can completely separate themselves from automobile traffic and the hot sun. However, it is located off of the two main corridors examined in this report. More of these areas should be built around the Capitol Complex.

Office workers on their lunch breaks seeking fresh air as well as visitors walking between the Capitol and the 'Museum District' would no doubt enjoy the chance to sit in the shade.

Aundre Dukes, Portfolio Manager and Public Liaison for the Texas Facilities Commission, indicated in a personal interview that some of the street fixtures in the Capitol Complex, such as lighting, are near the end of their useful lives. These fixtures should be replaced with new items of a uniform design. Currently, the Capitol Complex has adequate street lighting, but it emanates from very tall poles. In order to make the lighting more human-scaled, the lights should be placed atop shorter poles (around 10 ft tall) spaced out along the sidewalk. Light posts can be embellished with signage from the wayfinding scheme or with hanging baskets for plants.

The following diagrams show suggested improvements for the North Congress Avenue and San Jacinto Boulevard Corridors. These recommendations stem from the walkability analysis in the previous chapter.

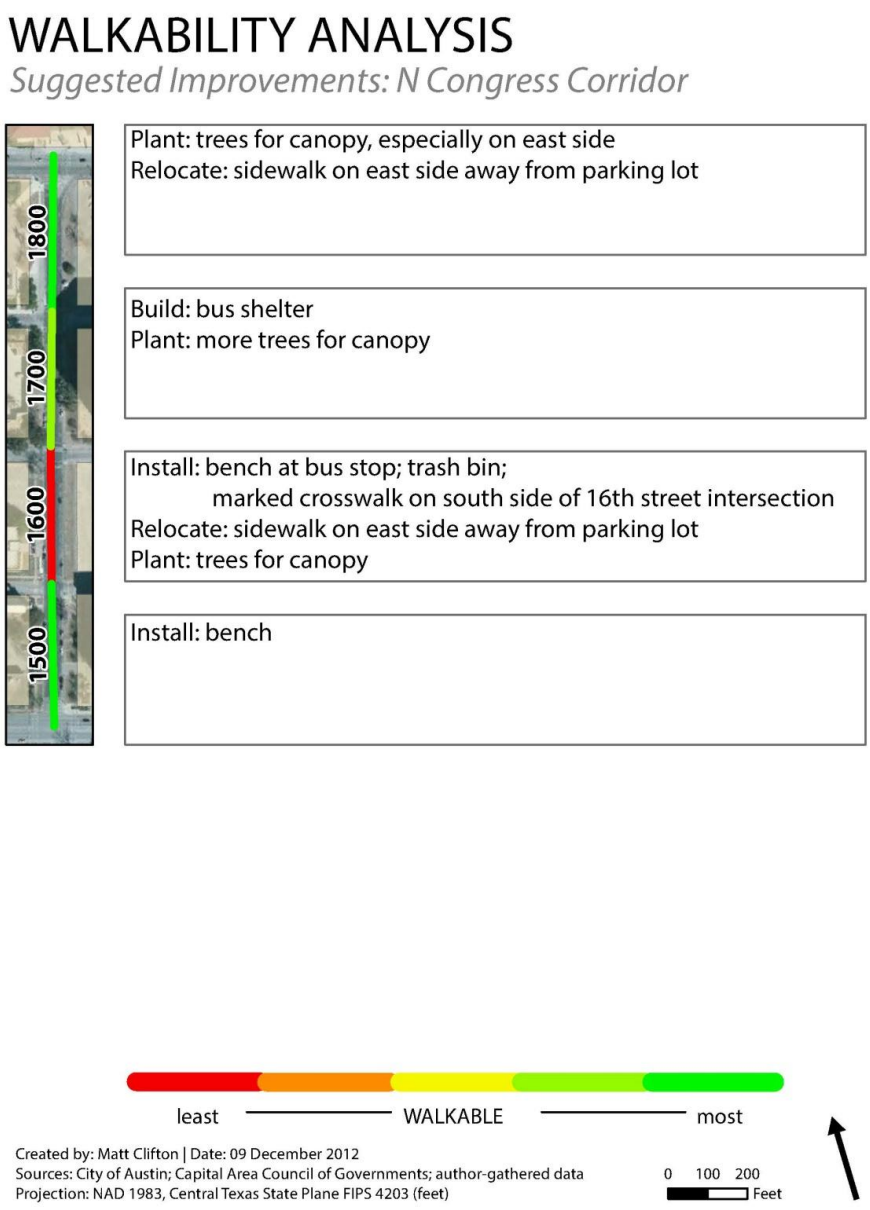


Illustration 4.3: Suggested walkability improvements for North Congress Avenue.

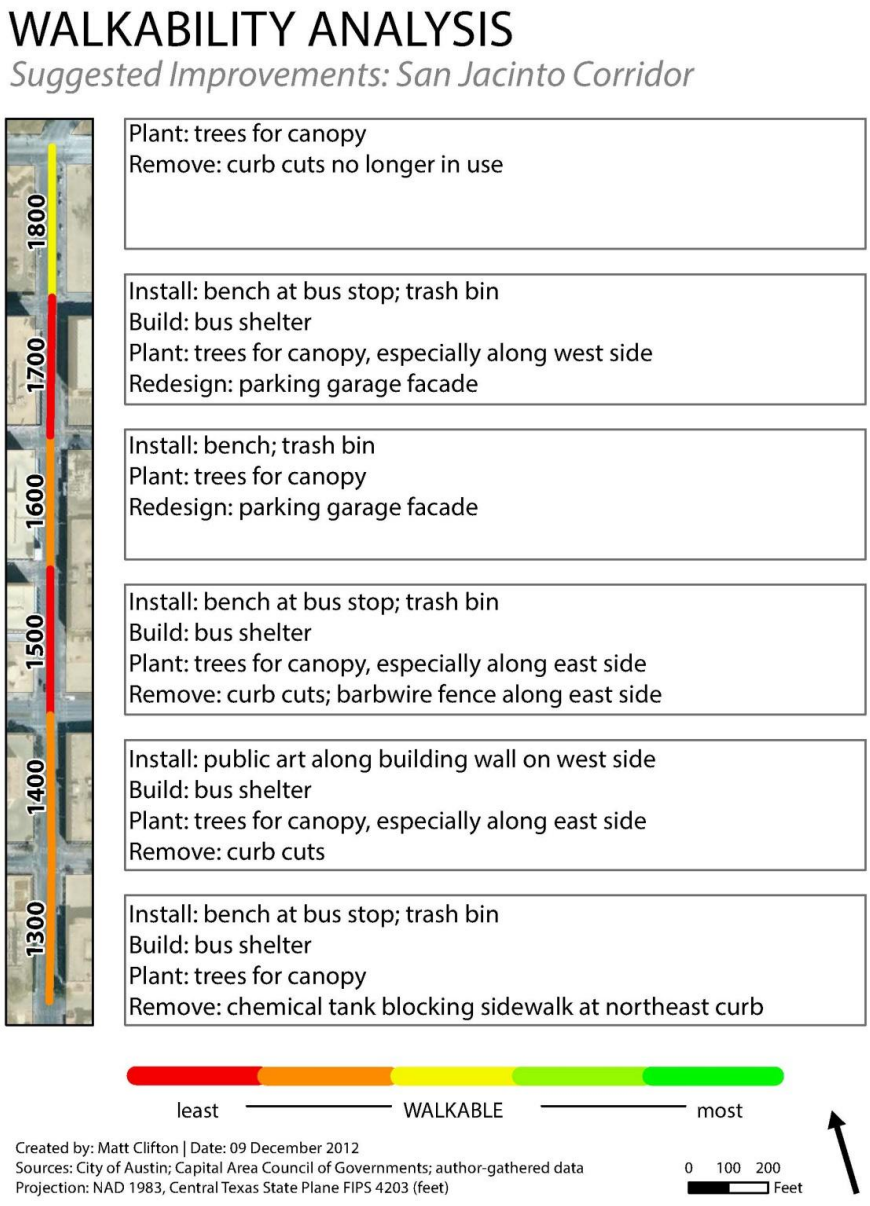


Illustration 4.4: Suggested walkability improvements for San Jacinto Boulevard.

Land use in the Capitol Complex is dominated by state office buildings and parking lots. Parcels that are home to surface lots are underutilized and may be the first properties to be redeveloped. Office buildings will continue to be a feature of the Complex; after all, the main purpose of the area is to provide a home for various state agencies. However, there are ways to ensure more varied activity in the Complex that can break the monotony of the 9-to-5 office dynamic that currently exists. For example, the ground floors of office buildings can be retrofitted to house restaurants or retail. An establishment serving lunch has a potential captive market in the 25,000 people working in the area. The patio areas in front of the office buildings along the 1700 block of North Congress could be used for outdoor dining. In addition, temporary initiatives can help enliven surface parking lots before they are replaced by buildings. Food trailers are a hallmark of the Austin dining scene and can be found around the city. These mobile vendors could visit a Capitol Complex parking lot a few times a week to serve lunch and dinner, possibly attracting pedestrians from the UT campus and the surrounding area. Similarly, a weekly farmers market could be hosted after office hours during the week to encourage some after-hours activity.

There is currently an oversupply of parking spaces in the Capitol Complex. Replacing surface lots should be step one in reducing the number. A few of the garages along San Jacinto are near the end of their life expectancies. They should be replaced with the mixed-use buildings that the TFC is planning.

The aforementioned land use/planning/urban design recommendations will help to change the visual dynamic of the Capitol Complex as well as to make the area more accommodating to pedestrians, visitors, and employees alike. The following pages present policy recommendations in order to ensure that the impending redevelopment of the Capitol Complex does not fail like previous attempts at planning the area's future

have. They will also make sure that the State gets the most out of property in the Capitol Complex, which is a very valuable asset for future Texans.

Policy recommendations

First and foremost, the complexities and uncertainties regarding guardianship over the Capitol Complex need to be settled. There are three state agencies that have a stake in the Capitol Complex: the General Land Office, the Texas Facilities Commission, and the Texas State Historic Preservation Board. In the words of Aundre Dukes, there is a "confluence of statute" regarding oversight of any redevelopment in the area (Dukes, pers. int. 2013). General Land Office Commissioner Jerry Patterson has proposed that all properties in the Capitol Complex be exempted from the GLO review with regards to whether or not a property is underutilized and should be sold (Siddall, pers. int. 2013). This would help to prevent events like the recent sale of a parcel and historic gas station at 1500 San Jacinto Boulevard. The Texas Facilities Commission regrets the sale, which seems to have 'slipped through the cracks' as it was not vetoed by the governor within 90 days of the GLO's recommendation to sell. This is indicative of the lack of effective communication among Capitol Complex stakeholders. At any rate, changes in the way agency oversight works in the Capitol Complex will require legislative action. The Texas Legislature only meets once every two years, so if no clarification is made through law in 2013, it will be 2015 until there is another chance. This is dangerously close to the expiry of a large chunk of state office leases in Travis County, the discontinuation of which would mean large savings for the State.

Of course, there are more indirect stakeholders to what occurs in the Capitol Complex beyond the three agencies mentioned. The people of Texas ultimately benefit when their government no longer pays to lease office space elsewhere. They also

benefit from having an attractive, walkable space to spend time in when they visit their state capitol in Austin. The citizens speak through their representatives, several of whom have publicly expressed concerns over the way redevelopment in the Capitol Complex is currently being handled through unsolicited proposals behind closed doors.

The City of Austin stands to benefit greatly from Capitol Complex redevelopment, and should be involved in the redevelopment process. The city government's experience with redevelopment, as well as the multitude of municipal policies surrounding it, can serve to inform the course of action taken by the State. There is a proposed interlocal agreement between the City of Austin and the Texas Facilities Commission. The contract proposes that the City be involved in a Capitol Area Development Study. This agreement should be officially adopted by both parties and joint information sessions should begin immediately.

The State would be wise to look to some of the City of Austin's development policies to guide redevelopment of the Capitol Complex. The 'Great Streets' program has led to the reconstruction of several blocks into environments that are very pedestrian-friendly. The State should consider adopting something very similar for development of the San Jacinto corridor. This area is favored for ground-leases. Developers could be given an incentive to install elements of the Great Streets program as part of their project. Similarly, Austin is planning an urban rail network that would run through the Complex. Development should be done in anticipation of the public transit network. This includes preparing rights-of-way as well as street amenities.

Waller Creek is a natural asset in the Capitol Complex that is ignored. After years of neglect in downtown Austin, Waller Creek has been remade through major renovation projects that have made the creek a feature for visitors to enjoy. The Waller Creek Plan which guided this revisioning process should be examined by State officials to see how

redevelopment in the Capitol Complex might bring the creek to the forefront of projects, instead of relegated to the backs of buildings and parking lots. Similarly, Waterloo Park has been slated for improvements. This park borders the eastern edge of the Capitol Complex. The park could serve as a draw for future residents of apartment buildings along San Jacinto Boulevard and should somehow be integrated into the Capitol Complex.

The new University of Texas medical school will likely be located to the northwest of the Capitol Complex. This represents a good opportunity for the State to target developers who see this as a potential new market. Students at the medical school will need places to live. Retail and dining options along San Jacinto Boulevard could cater to people affiliated with the medical school, as well as the UT campus in general. Walkability improvements will make it easier for people at the university to access destinations in the Complex. The University of Texas should be considered an important indirect stakeholder in Capitol Complex redevelopment.

Several interviewees and news articles mentioned the loosely-defined 'Museum District' at the corner of MLK Jr., Boulevard and North Congress Avenue. It seems that the necessary momentum to transform the immediate area into a veritable cultural destination exists. Capitol Complex redevelopment should include at least one project to further establish the nascent identity of the intersection. The Austin Planetarium would have accomplished this, but it now appears that negotiations with developers are on hold pending further legislative action. Not only has a potential new destination in the Capitol Complex been likely lost, such mixed signals from the State regarding negotiations with developers might scare others off. If there is no clear direction on how the State will approach redevelopment, investors may not be willing to take risks.

Legislators in the 2013 session have voiced concern over the General Land Office selling parcels in the Capitol Complex. One parcel containing a historic gas station was sold off against the wishes of the Texas Facilities Commission. Another parcel was slated for sale but was ultimately not sold due in part to the vocal opposition of a legislator. Property in the Capitol Complex is no doubt worth a considerable amount. Its central location is an asset and attractive to developers. As Austin continues growing at breakneck speed, the value of the land will increase even more. The people of Texas benefit from having the land in the Capitol Complex remain public. No more parcels should be sold to private individuals. Rather, the ground-lease approach to private development is appropriate and has been used successfully in other locations in Austin in the past.

Although the Capitol Complex suffers from challenges related to walkability and from its status as a 'non-place,' it has potential to fully incorporate itself into the urban dynamic of the surrounding city while at the same time serving the needs of its dominant landowner. If heeded, the walkability recommendations in this chapter should help to ensure that the pedestrian experience is improved. This in turn has the potential to increase the market value of redevelopment projects while simultaneously fostering a diversity of activity beyond 9-to-5 office work. This activity can then help to create a 'place' out of the Capitol Complex, possibly raising awareness of the area as a destination much like the South Congress corridor, or 'the Drag' (Guadalupe Street near the UT campus). Walkability improvements will likely only come out of a facilitative policy environment. This would prioritize replication of city-wide initiatives, a legislative 'clean house' devoid of the confluences of statute currently delaying progress on redevelopment projects, and a working relationship amongst all potential stakeholders.

Making the Capitol Complex a walkable ‘place’ is not impossible, but time is of the essence and these recommendations should be considered sooner rather than later.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the Capitol Complex in Austin, Texas, is a non-place that suffers from a lack of walkability. It has been plagued by a history of disjointed attempts at planning. It is dominated by the State of Texas, which holds a near-monopoly on property ownership and human activity within the area. It is, as one observer has so succinctly stated, a "black hole" in the middle of Austin surrounded by a rapidly-developing downtown of mixed uses and the bustling, vibrant campus of a major university.

The Capitol Complex represents a terrible outcome of good intentions. The State acquired most of the land in the mid-20th century in an attempt to consolidate its operations and reduce expenditures on leased office space. However, the previously existing neighborhood features were lost to the bulldozers, and sixty years later no comprehensive approach to redeveloping the area has taken shape. Instead, the grandeur of the state capitol building is mocked by the uninspired mishmash of office buildings to its north, much like an expensive topper crowning a cheap, poorly-frosted cake.

The Capitol Complex is a "non-place." Although there is a strong presence associated with the zone (the State of Texas), this is a presence that is amorphous, anonymous, and distant. There is nothing in the Capitol Complex, aside from the state flags flying outside the drab office buildings, that is readily identifiable with Texas. For a state with such a storied history and a near-mythical reputation, the physical presence of its government in Austin makes a feeble impression, apart from the Capitol building itself. Seeing the Capitol building in all its grandeur might make many a Texan feel proud, but such emotional stirrings are sure to fade quickly as one travels up North Congress Avenue towards Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

The human element, a vital component of what makes a place a "place," is decidedly absent from the Capitol Complex. The neighborhood destroyed by the bulldozers in the 1950s was most likely a hive of human activity day and night. Small businesses would have catered to the needs of residents. Students and staff from the University of Texas might have patronized restaurants and other service providers. Currently, human activity in the Capitol Complex is mostly concentrated on the 9-to-5 workings of the State bureaucracy. A few vestiges of the old neighborhood remain, but these are not enough to lend any sense of charm and stand literally in the shadows of unremarkable parking garages and insipid office buildings.

The monocentric nature of activity within the Capitol Complex precludes any sense of spontaneity. There is no resident population in the Capitol Complex. There are few businesses operating apart from state government. As a result, the zone is dead at night and on weekends.

The absence of 24-hour, multi-purposed human activity in the Capitol Complex precludes any sort of vernacular culture that would create a "place." The Capitol Complex in its current state does not need to attract any investors or outside interest. Its function is simply to provide a home for the operations of Texas' state government. There is no need to construct diversion or attraction. The only people making regular visits to the Complex are there for one reason: to do their jobs. Although there are bus routes serving the area and bike lanes traverse several of the streets, the plethora of parking suggests that most employees drive to work. At five o'clock, the garages and lots start emptying out. There is little to entice workers to stick around after work.

The Capitol Complex faces many challenges on its road to redevelopment. Priorities and responsibilities must be clarified and a united vision agreed upon in order to project a competent image to potential private-sector partners. A working relationship

with stakeholders, both direct and indirect, must be forged. The City of Austin is an invaluable partner. State officials stand to learn a great deal from the City's experience with redeveloping downtown. Some of Austin's redevelopment programs, including the Great Streets initiative, Downtown master plan, and the Waller Creek redevelopment plan could serve as models and inspiration for redevelopment in the Capitol Complex.

Improvements are needed in the realm of walkability and placemaking. In order for the desired mixed-use projects to be successful, the streets of the Capitol Complex should be pedestrian-friendly and actively encourage walking as a mode of transportation. A variety of streetscape improvements, including street furniture, street trees, and aesthetic improvements will help to make the area more walkable. Adding more 'destinations' within the Complex should be a priority when evaluating development proposals. The spillover effects of activity outside the Capitol Complex, such as the proposed University of Texas medical school, need to be considered in able for officials to adequately anticipate future demand for property within the Complex.

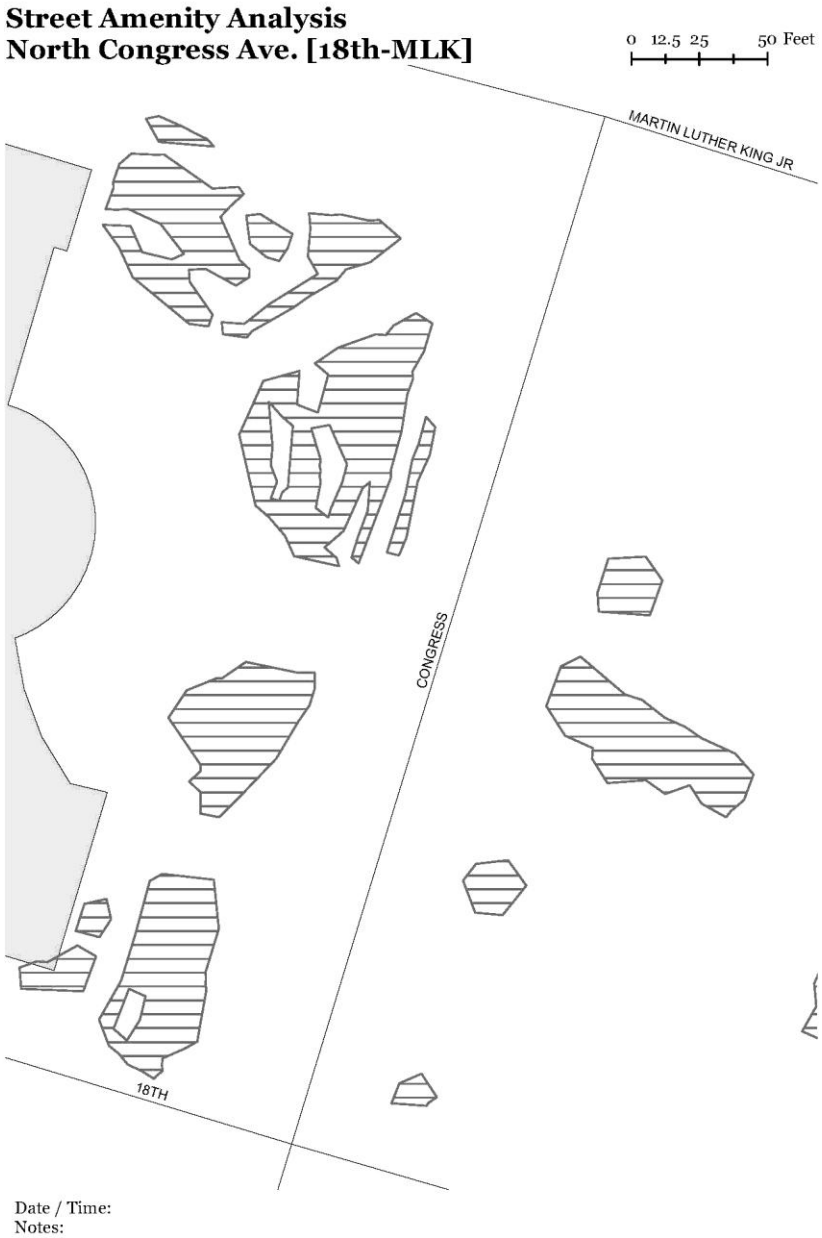
The Capitol Complex has the potential to accomplish several goals: to host new state office buildings; to serve as a new mixed-use, high-density area comparable to downtown Austin and the nearby West Campus neighborhood; to offer visitors from both Austin and out of town cultural and historical activities; and to bring additional revenue to the state treasury. Redevelopment in the Capitol Complex should not just consist of solely constructing new buildings. Instead, a unified vision highlighting placemaking with an emphasis on walkability should be drafted and applied to any new project.

Redevelopment activities will leave their mark on the Complex for some time to come. The Capitol Complex has seen several botched attempts at planning since its creation roughly 60 years ago. The current initiative has the potential to transform the area into an active, attractive connection between the University of Texas and downtown

Austin. The State of Texas owes it to all Texans to deliberately and carefully utilize this valuable asset to its highest potential.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE STREET AMENITY ANALYSIS FORM

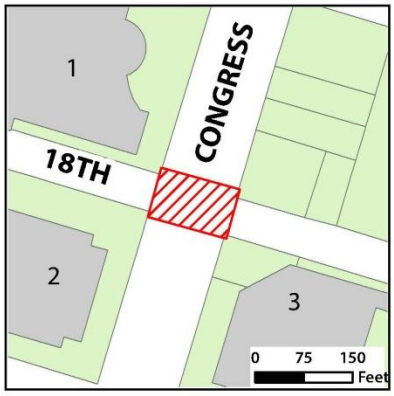


APPENDIX B: SAMPLE PEDESTRIAN COUNT FORM

WALKABILITY ANALYSIS

Pedestrian Count Tally Sheet

1: Bob Bullock Museum
2: Stephen Austin Building
3: William Travis Building



Date:

Time:

Observed weather:

Tally in the box below each pedestrian who enters the intersection.
They do not have to cross the street; they must enter the right-of-way.

Count technician(s):

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Placemaking in Austin's Capitol Complex
Interview Protocol

Interviewee/Agency: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

SAY: "Thank you for meeting with me. If you don't mind, I will be audio recording this interview to help me with note-taking. If you would rather I not record, let me know and I will only take handwritten notes. You don't have to answer any question you don't want to. If you don't want me to name you specifically in my report, let me know and I will label you as "anonymous." This interview shouldn't take more than an hour and fifteen minutes."

1) Currently, what is your agency's position regarding the recent initiative to redevelop the Capitol Complex?

2) What are your agency's goals in redeveloping the Capitol Complex?

3) What obstacles or challenges exist for your agency in participating in the redevelopment?

4) What legislation does your agency need to be able to realize its goals for redevelopment?

5) Are there any proposals that you are aware of that would greatly enhance/hinder your agency's participation in redevelopment?

6) Has your agency considered anything in the way of walkability, streetscape, and/or "placemaking" improvements to coincidence with or precede redevelopment of parcels or buildings?

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