

PRESERVING NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER THROUGH VOLUNTARY DESIGN GUIDELINES

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, REDEVELOPMENT, ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



BOULDIN CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AREA

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, contact Pollyanne Melton, Urban Designer (512) 974-6459;

City of Austin, Transportation, Planning & Sustainability Department,

Urban Design & Historic Preservation Division

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INTRODUCTION

CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Survey results indicated that most people are happy with the character of the neighborhood as it currently exists and would like to retain it.

The top three reasons people choose to live in this neighborhood according to the survey are:

- 1) access to highways and city,
- 2) diversity (economic, social, cultural) and
- 3) established trees.

The major characteristic defining Bouldin Creek, although not necessarily of landmark historic stature, is that it is a mature, urban neighborhood. The age of the houses, churches, and many of the retail shops, as well as natural features such as the creeks and the very mature trees, and the fact that these assets have been built up over time, is irreplaceable.

Residential Character: With few exceptions, the houses were not built by one developer, but were built individually in many styles by different owners in materials as varied as stucco, brick, stone and wood. The eclecticism that this represents is very valued by our community. In general, houses are tucked among towering trees and abundant landscaping, tied to the earth with porches and decks and do not shout their presence to the street or to their neighbors. The variation in color, style and texture is mitigated also by human scale and similar massing. Houses are mostly one-story with simple shapes and typically gabled or hipped roofs. Garages and carports are rare, and driveways are narrow and unobtrusive. Street furniture, sidewalks and lighting are minimal.

Commercial Character: Commercial centers in Bouldin Creek are typically linear and based along the perimeter of the residential core. South Congress is the busiest retail strip with many flat-roofed, two-story structures that typically provide a continuous, often shaded, walking path. Parking is provided directly in front of the stores or behind the buildings. The parked cars in front actually provide a type of buffer between pedestrians and the cars traveling at often highway speeds up South Congress. South First has more discontinuous structures that are mostly one-story and broken up repeatedly by driveways and parking lots.

Public Space Character: The streets of the neighborhood are comfortable for walking and biking. Sidewalks are often shaded by trees in the residential areas and by awnings or canopies over store fronts. Innovative front yard landscaping and store fronts make the streetscape interesting and inviting. The passive, green qualities of the parks and creeks are loved and ardently protected by appreciative neighbors.

INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES

Neighborhood objectives reflected in these Guidelines include:

- ⇒ Encourage the renovation, rather than the demolition, of existing structures.
- ⇒ Retain current setback limits. Prohibit the removal of healthy trees over 3" in caliper.
- ⇒ Encourage the planting of more trees and other native landscaping, while taking care to prevent hazardous overgrowth that reduces sight lines at street corners.
- ⇒ Encourage the existing building pattern of front porches, one to two story massing, use of natural or simple materials, narrow street fronts, few garages, narrow drives, etc.
- ⇒ Promote the eclecticism of the design fabric in the neighborhood by encouraging sympathetic responses to the current styles, but not clones. Discourage development of more than one or two adjacent lots at one time by one developer.
- ⇒ Encourage the use of a variety of natural materials in public structures such as sidewalks and retaining walls. Encourage the integration of such programs as Art in Public Places to design street furnishings such as transit shelters.
- ⇒ Bury utilities underground whenever possible, particularly when streets are already undergoing other work.
- ⇒ Retain the current pattern of development along South Congress Avenue.
- ⇒ Encourage the connection of South Austin to Town Lake Park and Town Lake by easing pedestrian access from Barton Springs Road, keeping the scale of mixed use development along the street to a 35'-40' building height, burying utility lines and encouraging tree planting and sidewalk alternatives (inlaid tiles, etc.).
- ⇒ Encourage properties along South First to limit number of curb cuts, combine parking areas, provide continuous pedestrian access, keep buildings to the street edge, or back from the street to allow sidewalk cafes or other pedestrian-friendly amenities.

INTRODUCTION

GOALS OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following three major goals provide the foundation for Neighborhood Design Guidelines within City of Austin neighborhoods.

Goal 1: Respect the Historic, Ethnic and Cultural Character of the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood.

The Guidelines aim to reinforce those positive elements, patterns, and characteristics that exist within the neighborhood, that help create a unique sense of place within the city. The Guidelines serve as a framework for new development providing suggestions as to how it may fit into the existing neighborhood character in terms of scale, mass, building patterns, and details. Following the Guidelines helps ensure the existing neighborhood character is preserved, maintained or even enhanced.

Goal 2: Ensure Compatibility and Encourage a Complementary Relationship between Adjacent Land Uses.

In the Future Land Use Map, the neighborhood has expressed a preference for increasing or decreasing the occurrence of certain types of land uses in the neighborhood. The Guidelines show how these uses can be grouped together to create a complementary mixture of uses while being designed so as to be compatible with each other.

Goal 3: Enhance and Enliven the Streetscape.

The Guidelines promote the design of safe and interesting streetscapes that are comfortable for walking, biking, and transit use. Key to achieving this goal is creating a sense of human scale in the buildings defining the streetscape, enhancing visibility from the building to the sidewalk, and providing accessible, adequately-sized and protected pathways.

INTRODUCTION

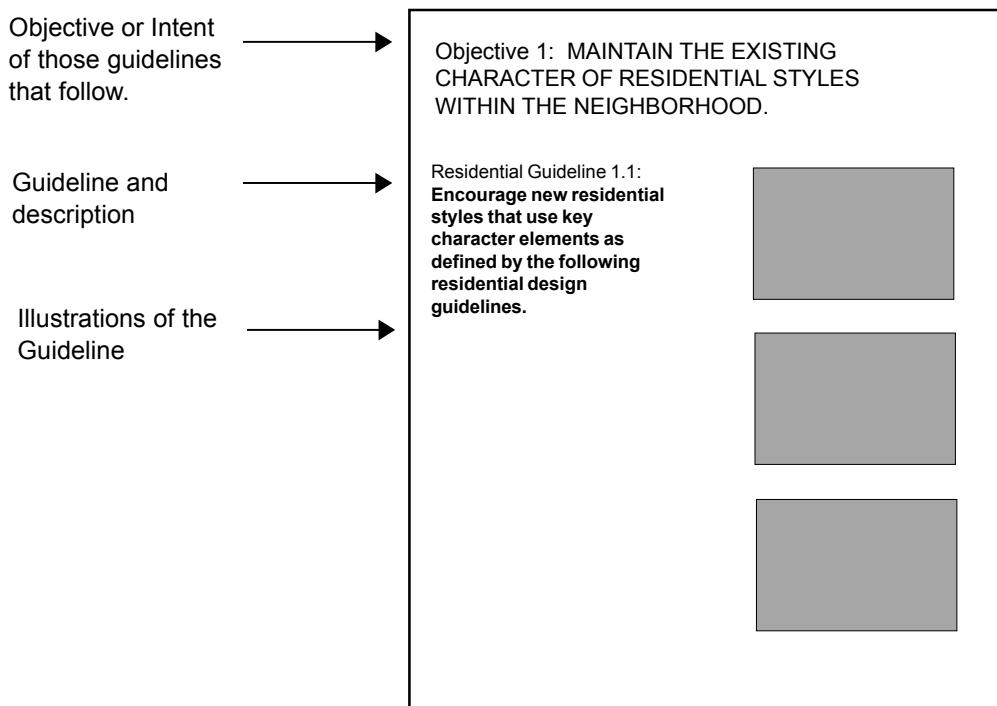
GUIDELINES ORGANIZATION

GUIDELINES are made up of separate Objectives to serve each major type of development that might occur in the neighborhood:

Residential Development: Single Family, Multi-Family, Secondary Unit
Public Space Development
Commercial Development

FORMAT for the Guidelines is illustrated below.

All Guidelines address one or more of the three goals described above. The main objective is stated at the top of each page. The numbering system cites the number of the Objective and the number of the guideline itself. For example, Residential Guideline 1.1 is the first Guideline under the first Objective.



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RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Residential Objective 1: MAINTAIN THE SINGLE-FAMILY CHARACTER OF THE INTERIOR OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. MAINTAIN THE EXISTING CHARACTER OF HOUSE STYLES WITHIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. ENCOURAGE NEW CONSTRUCTION, ADDITIONS OR RECONSTRUCTION THAT USE KEY ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER ELEMENTS FOUND IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Guideline 1.1: Houses are predominantly 1 story high, with the first floor level 12-24 inches above the ground. The height of each floor of new construction should be similar to floor-to-floor heights on existing houses. If a second story addition is desired, locate the addition to the center of building footprint, and design it to resemble the existing house in overall shape, materials and colors.



Guideline 1.2: Use a house footprint similar to the typical simple rectangle or L-shape plan, with the narrow end of the rectangle facing the street.



Guideline 1.3: Roofs should be simple in form, either gabled or hipped, with low to moderate pitch (5 or 7:12 is common). Typical roofing materials include metal and tabbed composition shingles.



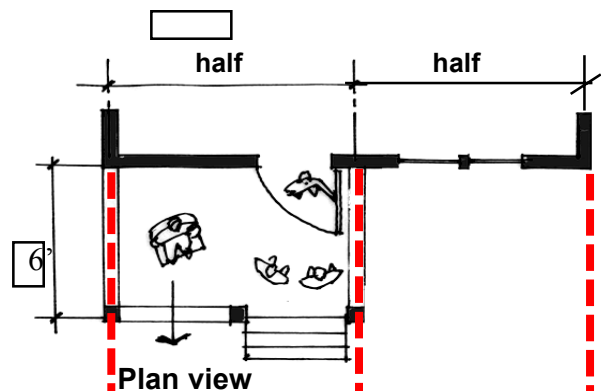
RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

MAINTAINING THE SINGLE-FAMILY CHARACTER OF THE INTERIOR OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Guideline 1.4: Garages or carports are not common in the neighborhood but where they exist, they are detached and located at the rear of the lot. If an attached garage is desired, setting it back at least 10 feet from the front facade of the house will help to preserve the people-oriented character of the streetscape. Garages are typically designed to resemble the house in shape, material and color.



ally modest
houses have
half the front
least 6 feet
space to sit



RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

MAINTAINING THE SINGLE-FAMILY CHARACTER OF THE INTERIOR OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Guideline 1.6: The relative amount of wall space occupied by windows, their proportion and the pattern of window placement in new construction should be similar to that of existing houses.



Guideline 1.7: Natural materials such as wood, stucco, brick or stone are typical exterior wall materials. Common wood siding styles include vertical board and batten and narrow horizontal clapboard siding. There are many new materials available that are environmentally-friendly but still provide the sense of scale and texture common to the existing materials found in the neighborhood.



RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Residential Objective 2: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE PATTERN OF LANDSCAPED FRONT YARDS THAT GIVES THE NEIGHBORHOOD A PLEASANT, FRIENDLY APPEARANCE.

Guideline 2.1: Mature, existing trees in front yards and along the street are one of the most dominant visual characteristics of the residential interior of the neighborhood. Trees should be preserved and protected and additional trees planted to create a continuous canopy of cooling shade over the street and sidewalks. Developers are encouraged to be pro-active on tree preservation and planting.



Guideline 2.2: Setting houses back from the street at a distance similar to the setback of most of the houses on the street helps form a coherent transition zone between the public space of the street and the private space of the home.



RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING THE PATTERN OF FRONT YARDS

Guideline 2.3: Fences in the neighborhood are often works of art, utilizing found materials in whimsical ways. Friendly fences or hedges along the front property line, and the side yards in front of the house should be low enough to see over the top (less than 4 feet) or allow views through to avoid creating a walled-off appearance.



Guideline 2.4: Front yards should be green xeriscape landscaped areas with minimal impervious paving. Using native plant materials creates a healthy environment that is sustainable for the long-term. Parking in the front yard is discouraged except in a driveway to the side of the house. If larger areas of parking are needed, they should be located behind the house.



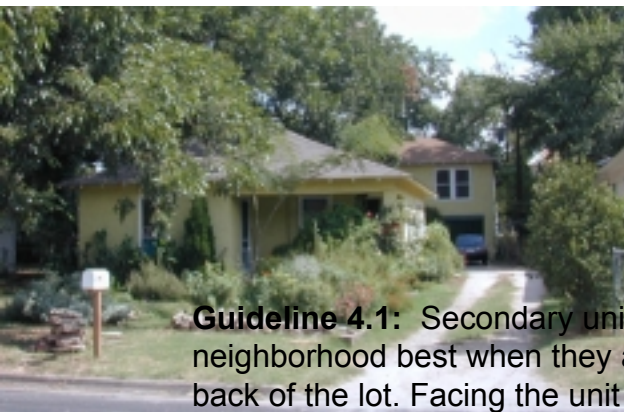
Guideline 2.5: Mechanical equipment (air conditioners, electric meters, gas meters etc.) and garbage carts or garbage storage areas are best located to the side or rear of the house, where they cannot be seen from the street. If the location is visible from the street, it should be screened from view.

Guideline 2.6: Exterior building and site lighting should be unobtrusive, shielded and directed downward so as not to intrude upon neighboring properties.

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

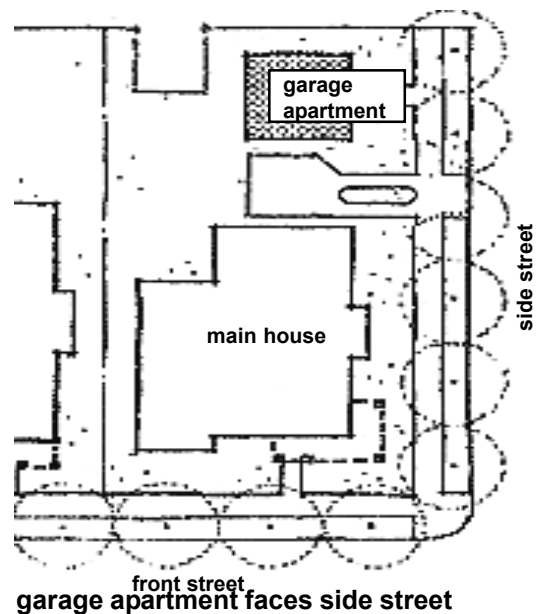
Residential Objective 3: MAINTAIN THE STREET-ORIENTED CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD WHEN CONSTRUCTING NEW HOUSES.

Guideline 3.1: New houses should be designed to have a good view of the street. The front of the house should have a door, at least two windows, and a porch facing the street. Having “eyes on the street” is one way to enhance the sense of security on the street, especially for bicyclists and pedestrians.



Guideline 4.1: Secondary units fit into the neighborhood best when they are set at the back of the lot. Facing the unit to the side street enlivens that street while providing more privacy for the main house.

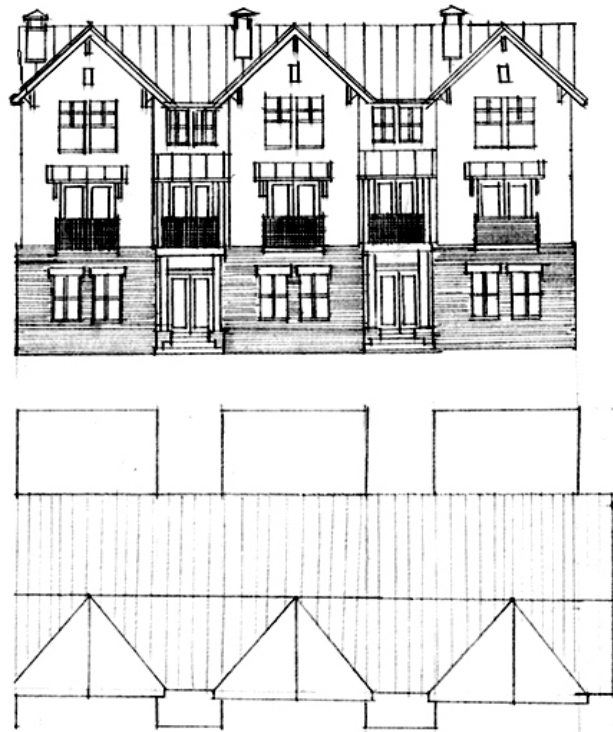
REINFORCE THE EXISTING RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD WHEN BUILDING GARAGE SECONDARY DWELLING UNITS. IN ADDITION TO THE REQUIREMENTS LISTED ABOVE FOR SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES, REFER TO THE FOLLOWING GARAGE SECONDARY DWELLING UNIT REQUIREMENTS.



RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Residential Objective 5: PROVIDE A DIVERSITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING THAT IS IN KEEPING WITH THE CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Guideline 5.1: Multi-family buildings less than 100 feet in width on any street-facing side are more in keeping with the scale of the neighborhood. Building facades should be divided into approximately 30-foot wide bays and be treated as separate units to avoid a blocky appearance.



Guideline 5.2: Use exterior building materials typical to the neighborhood: stone, brick, wood or stucco.

Facade is divided into 30 foot increments.
Rooflines are simple.

Guideline 5.3: Multi-family buildings should have the same relationship to the street as single family houses. Landscaped front yards with porches or balconies and a walkway connecting the building to the street sidewalk are neighborhood characteristics. Front doors and windows facing the street encourage neighborliness and enhance security by putting “eyes on the street”.



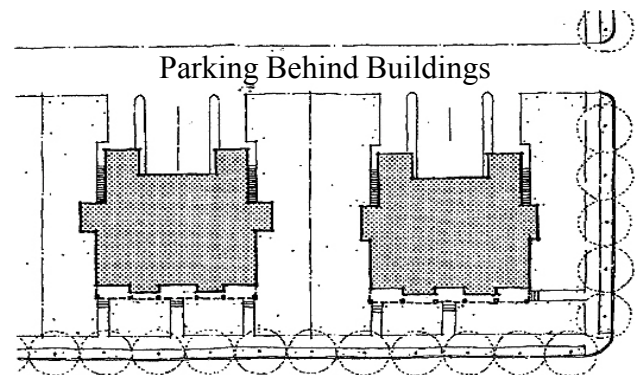
RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

PROVIDING A DIVERSITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS IN KEEPING WITH THE CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Guidelines 5.4: Parking lots along the street detract from the pedestrian-oriented character of the neighborhood. Locating parking lots to the side or behind the building or buffering the lot from street view by a fence or hedge, low enough to screen the cars but allowing visibility for security, helps to preserve the quality of the streetscape.



Guideline 5.5: Service areas for trash disposal, air conditioners, and utility meters are best located behind the building or screened from public view.



PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Public Space Objective 1: ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION BY IMPROVING THE DESIGN OF THE PUBLIC WAY: SIDEWALKS, STREETS AND TRANSIT FACILITIES.

Guideline 1.1: Sidewalks are needed along at least one side of a residential street to provide pedestrian linkage between the neighborhood and commercial areas, transit stops and civic areas such as parks, churches and schools. The greater amount of pedestrian activity in commercial areas requires sidewalks at least 8 feet wide. The use of special paving details or materials such as unit pavers, imprinted or colored concrete, or scoring patterns, is a useful way to highlight commercial areas as distinct from residential areas.



Guideline 1.2: Separating sidewalks from the street by a minimum 4 foot wide planting strip wherever the street right-of way is sufficiently wide enhances pedestrian safety and comfort. Native grasses such as buffalo grass, and native, non-littering shade trees that do not require a lot of water or maintenance are appropriate to the Austin climate.



Guideline 1.4: The sidewalk should provide a continuous safe zone for pedestrians with as few curb cuts as possible. Building residential and commercial driveways to the minimum dimensions allowed by City of Austin Transportation Criteria Manual improves pedestrian comfort and safety.



PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN GUIDELINES

IMPROVING THE DESIGN OF THE PUBLIC WAY

Guideline 1.3: Tree-lined streets beautify the neighborhood, encourage pedestrian activity and create a more liveable environment. Planting trees in a strip between the street and sidewalk is preferred as it shades the pavement and reduces heat build-up but planting trees immediately to the rear of the sidewalk is a good alternative. Planting trees in pits with grates and decorative sidewalk planters works well where pedestrian traffic is heavy. All tree plantings in the public right-of-way are subject to a City license agreement (Parks and Recreation Department).



Guideline 1.5: Allowing parking on the street wherever the right-of-way is wide enough to accommodate it helps to calm traffic. At intersections of commercial and residential streets, a “bulb-out” or “neck-down” is an effective way to narrow the street crossing for pedestrians and calm traffic as it enters the residential areas of the neighborhood.



Guideline 1.6: Consolidating and carefully locating street furnishings and utility equipment necessary for the function of the street makes walking easier and safer. Mounting street and traffic control signs on light poles, rather than on individual posts, reduces the number of impediments in the pedestrian way. Grouping and locating utility boxes and vending machines along the curb side of the sidewalk further clears the way for pedestrians.



PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Public Space Objective 2. PROVIDE WORKABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DRIVING PRIVATE VEHICLES IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Guideline 2.1: Neighborhood stakeholders should work closely with Capital Metro to locate and design bus stops and transit plazas in a way that serves neighborhood needs and is compatible with neighborhood character.

Public Space Objective 3: ENHANCE THE ABILITY OF PARKS, GREENWAYS, PUBLIC FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE TO SERVE AS COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACES.

Guideline 3.1: Increasing accessibility to school grounds facilitates their use by the community after school hours and expands recreational opportunities in the neighborhood.

Conveniently located entrances and handicapped-accessible walkways connecting facilities on the school grounds to the street, as well as to the school, invite community use.

Guideline 3.2: Defining edges and entrances and improving access to and through the park helps these spaces to live up to their potential as civic gathering places and landmarks of the community.

Providing gateways - of simple or elaborate design depending on the use - are effective means of identifying where to enter the park.

Low walls, fencing allowing views through them, such as steel picket, hedges and vines are useful for defining the park's edge while permitting surveillance.

COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Commercial Objective 1: CREATE A HUMAN-SCALE ENVIRONMENT ALONG THE COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Recognize that the linear commercial districts forming the boundaries of the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood have three distinct characters that should be retained and enhanced: South Congress, South 1st and Barton Springs Road. The urban design elements of each street should be modified as appropriate to the scale and the flavor of each commercial area.

Guideline 1.1: Encourage mixed-use structures and corner stores to bring around-the-clock vitality to the neighborhood. Live-work spaces and apartments over stores with balconies overlooking the street increases security for both residents and businesses and provides residents easy access to goods and services needed on a daily basis.



Guideline 1.2: Buildings located along the commercial corridors should be built up to the minimum front yard and side yard setback lines to create a human-scale streetscape. An exception to this guideline would be to allow buildings set back farther to create outdoor seating areas, sidewalk cafes, outdoor markets, transit plazas or other facilities attractive to pedestrians.



Guideline 1.3: Dividing building facades into 30 foot (more or less) wide bays helps to reduce the overwhelming scale of large buildings. Using different materials and colors or recessing alternating bays of the building are effective ways to break up a blocky appearance. Commercial buildings should be designed to reflect residential scale and character where possible. The use of traditional building materials such as brick, stone and stucco is encouraged.



COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Commercial Objective 2: ENHANCE INTEREST, SAFETY AND WEATHER PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WALKING IN SHOPPING DISTRICTS

Guideline 2.1: Awnings or canopies along the street facing building facade encourages walking and shopping by providing shade and rain protection. The cover should extend the full length of the facade and be at least 5 feet wide.



Guideline 2.2: Pedestrian level lighting, mounted on the building or on poles in addition to public street lighting enhances security and encourages walking and shopping.



Guideline 2.3: Store windows with interesting displays of merchandise and frequent entrances make a commercial street inviting to shoppers and pleasant to walk along. The front facade of the building should be “active” with at least 50% of the facade in windows, with doors spaced no more than 50 feet apart and with balconies on the upper stories.



COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

ENHANCING INTEREST, SAFETY AND WEATHER PROTECTION

Guideline 2.4: In addition to signs directed at motorists, signage should be oriented to the pedestrian and be readable from 20 feet away on the sidewalk. Pedestrian-friendly signage, mounted on the building, on awnings, or inside storefronts rather than on separate poles or detached structures makes for a lively and attractive commercial street. Creative signage that is in keeping with the architectural style of the building or suggests the nature of the business inside is encouraged.



Guideline 2.5: Incorporating locally produced art into commercial architecture brings the unique character of the neighborhood to its business districts.



COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Commercial Objective 3: MAINTAIN THE CHARACTER OF SOUTH CONGRESS AVENUE AND SOUTH FIRST STREET.

Guideline 3.1: Maintain South Congress as a pedestrian-oriented “destination” boulevard while preserving the adjacent residential area.



Guideline 3.2: Preserve South First Street as an eclectic mix of commercial, residential and office uses that serve as “Downtown Bouldin Creek”.



COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

MAINTAINING THE CHARACTER OF SOUTH CONGRESS AVENUE AND SOUTH FIRST STREET

Guideline 3.3: The impact of parking can be mitigated by locating it beside or behind buildings and by screening the parking from public view by means of a low (less than 4 foot high) hedge, wall or fence that buffers the view of parking while maintaining security viewing into the lot.



Parking Buffered or Behind Building

