

Dawson

Neighborhood Plan

PLAN ADOPTED: August 27, 1998

This Neighborhood Plan has been amended by City Council. These amendments may include text changes or Future Land Use Map (FLUM) changes. Please refer to the Ordinance Chart on the planning area webpage for more information on amendments. Planning and Development Review staff updates the Ordinance Chart on a regular basis; however, newly adopted amendments may not be reflected on the chart.





The Dawson Neighborhood Plan

An amendment to the
City of Austin's Comprehensive Plan

The Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan
Chapter 5
Section 5-1
Exhibit A

August 27, 1998

Acknowledgements

The following individual served on either the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team or one of its subcommittees:

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The Dawson Neighborhood Plan

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THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN Executive Summary



Dawson Neighborhood Plan

Executive Summary

Dawson Neighborhood Boundaries:

North - W. Oltorf Street
South - Ben White Blvd.
East - S. Congress Ave.
West - S. First St.

Dawson Neighborhood Size:

Length - 1 mile
Width - 1/2 mile
Area - 1/2 square mile
1996 Population - 3,387
- City of Austin Data

Dawson Neighborhood Ethnicity:

Hispanic - 57%
Anglo - 39%
African-American - 2%
Asian-American - 2%
- 1990 U. S. Census

"What do I like most about the neighborhood? Lots of things - the trees, my neighbors, the nearby businesses - but mostly I just like the feel of the place.

- Dawson Resident

The Dawson neighborhood is the first to complete a neighborhood plan under the City of Austin's Pilot Neighborhood Planning Program. The Dawson Neighborhood Plan is the result of an extensive collaborative effort between neighborhood residents, businesses and property owners with support of city staff. The plan contains broad goals and objectives, as well as particular actions to achieve those goals. This executive summary briefly describes the Dawson neighborhood, the neighborhood planning process and the goals of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan.

The Dawson Neighborhood

The Dawson neighborhood is an established mixed-use neighborhood in south-central Austin. The neighborhood runs from W. Oltorf Street to Ben White Boulevard between South Congress Avenue and South First Street (see figure 1). The natural character of the neighborhood is enhanced by numerous large oaks, and by East Bouldin Creek which flows through the center of the neighborhood. The land use is distinguished by major commercial corridors on S. First St. and S. Congress Ave and stable residential areas on the interior of the neighborhood. The population is primarily a mix of Hispanic and Anglo residents, with smaller numbers of Asian-American and African-American residents.

Neighborhood Planning Process

The neighborhood planning concept was first suggested for Austin by the Citizens' Planning Committee in 1995, and the City Council endorsed the approach in 1996. In the Spring of 1997 the City's Planning, Environmental and Conservation Services Department accepted applications for the Pilot Neighborhood Planning Program. In July, 1997, after staff review and analysis, City Council selected the Dawson Neighborhood to be one of three pilot planning neighborhoods.

In September, the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team began formal meetings with representatives of homeowners,

renters, non-resident property owners and small and large businesses. Over the next several months these volunteers worked with City Neighborhood Planning Staff, gathering information and drafting the plan. Staff gathered existing plans and studies on the area, and volunteers completed an walking inventory of the neighborhood's physical infrastructure.

Many of the plan's recommendations are based on the results of an extensive survey of residents, business and non-resident property owners conducted in November 1997. These recommendations were reviewed by the neighborhood, representatives of the Austin Real Estate Council, and City departments. The final recommendations were approved by residents, businesses and property owners in a neighborhood referendum.

Throughout the planning process, the Neighborhood Planning Team and City Staff updated the community through a monthly hand-delivered newsletter, neighborhood meetings, and postings to the City's web site. The high level of response to the survey (20%) and the referendum (15%) are indications of the exceptional success the Neighborhood Planning Team had in engaging the entire neighborhood in the planning process.

Neighborhood Plan Goals

The Dawson Neighborhood Plan has 8 major goals:

- 1. PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD.**
- 2. IMPROVE SAFETY AND REDUCE CRIME.**
- 3. IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH.**
- 4. ENCOURAGE APPROPRIATE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.**
- 5. INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S RESOURCES.**
- 6. IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY AND SAFETY, THE PEDESTRIAN AND BIKING ENVIRONMENT AND RAIL OPPORTUNITIES.**
- 7. IMPROVE PARKS, RECREATION AND GREENSPACE.**
- 8. PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.**

The plan details the objectives that support these general goals and specific action items to implement these goals and objectives. The successful adoption and implementation of this plan will help ensure that the Dawson Neighborhood remains a great place to live, work and shop, and a vibrant component of the larger city.

Milestones in the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Process:

- August '97** - City Council selects Dawson neighborhood for pilot project.
- Sept. '97** - Neighborhood Inventory.
- Nov. '97** - Survey of residents, property Owners & businesses.
- Nov. '97** - Goals and Objectives established.
- Jan. '98** First draft of recommendations completed.
- March '98** - Community Workshop.
- March '98** - Neighborhood Referendum on Plan
- April '98** - City. Departmental Review
- May '98** - Dawson Neighborhood Plan endorsed by the Planning Commission.
- August '98** - Dawson Neighborhood Plan approved by the Austin City Council, formally amending the city's comprehensive plan.

THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Introduction



Introduction

Landmarks in the Dawson Neighborhood:

- Gillis Park
- Dawson Elementary School
- H.E.B. Grocery
- South Austin Multi-purpose Center
- South First Baptist Church
- South Austin A.P.D. Neighborhood Center

Landmarks near the Dawson Neighborhood:

- St. Ignatius Catholic Church
- Twin Oaks Branch Library
- St. Edward's University

Other Elements of the Dawson Neighborhood Character:

"Family-Oriented"

"Diverse"

"Close to Downtown"

"Nice mix of businesses"

"Friendly, honest neighbors"

"Quiet, peaceful"

- Various

Respondents;

Dawson

Neighborhood

Survey, 1997.

The Dawson Neighborhood

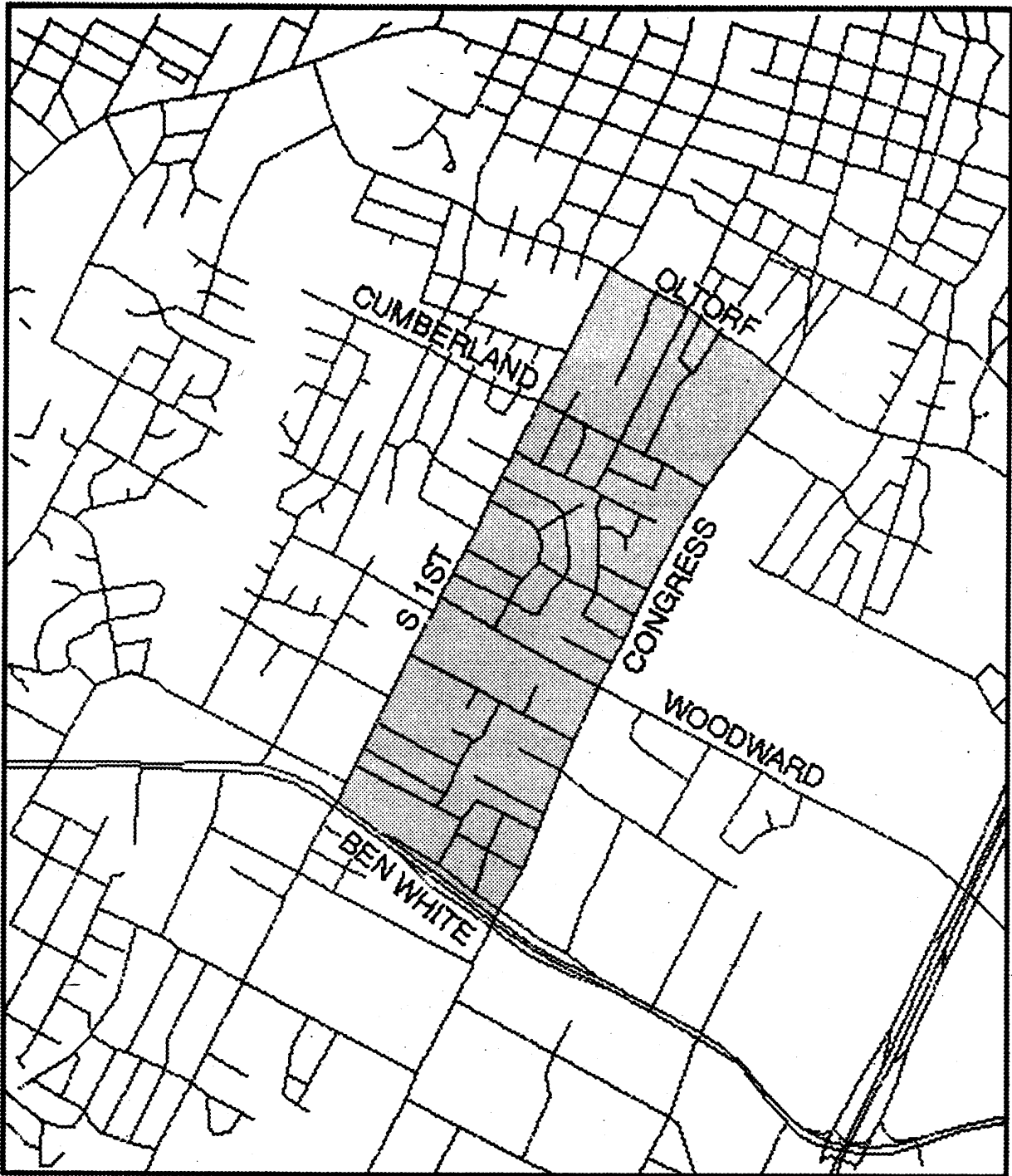
The Dawson Neighborhood is bounded on the south by Ben White Boulevard, on the east by South Congress Avenue, on the west by South First Street and on the north by West Oltorf Street (see figure 1). The Dawson Neighborhood has for some years been an established residential neighborhood bordered by commercial and civic development (see figure 2). Within its commercial boundaries are located small and moderate-sized apartment complexes, single family residences, a few trailer homes, cottages and small businesses. The neighborhood is poised on the brink of re-development due to Austin's economic recovery, the increasing value of residential properties, and its proximity to downtown. East Bouldin Creek meanders through the residential center and, although severely damaged over the years, provides a focal point of natural beauty to residents. Other natural assets which survive are spreading live oaks and lovely undeveloped lots which lend a rural air.

Long-time residents of the Dawson neighborhood express a great fondness for the area and a desire to remain. They see the neighborhood as stable and quiet with easy access to stores and services they use.

South Congress Avenue north of Oltorf has enjoyed significant redevelopment over the past years. One downside of this has been to push some criminal activity further south on Congress into the Dawson neighborhood. Residents and businesses are concerned about prostitution encroaching onto their streets. Increased speeding cut-through traffic and the inevitable crimes of urban life are serious quality-of-life issues as well. Pride in the neighborhood, a desire to maintain the quiet residential quality of the area and its natural beauty all combine to encourage participation in planning activities.

Dawson Neighborhood Plan

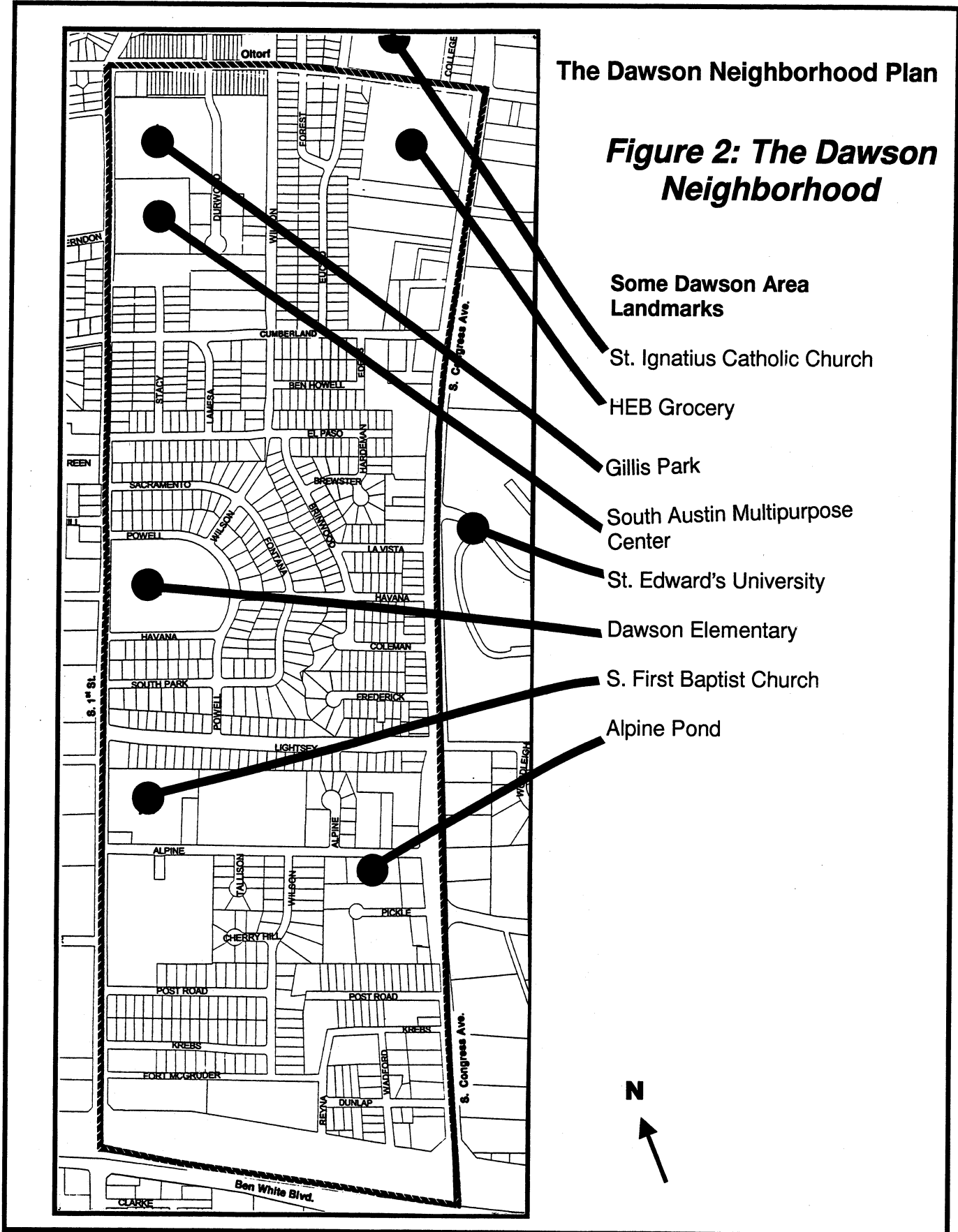
Figure 1: Location of the Dawson Neighborhood



Dawson is an established mixed-use neighborhood in South Central Austin. The neighborhood runs from W. Oltorf St. to Ben White Blvd between South Congress Ave. and South First Street.

The Dawson Neighborhood Plan

Figure 2: The Dawson Neighborhood



Some Dawson Area Landmarks

St. Ignatius Catholic Church

HEB Grocery

Gillis Park

South Austin Multipurpose Center

St. Edward's University

Dawson Elementary

S. First Baptist Church

Alpine Pond

Mission and Goals

The mission of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan is to provide planning objectives and priorities that preserve and enhance the neighborhood's character and natural beauty.

The Dawson Neighborhood Plan has eight major goals, each supported by more focused objectives. The eight goals and their objectives are:

Neighborhood Character

1. Preserve the character of the Dawson Neighborhood.

- Objective: Preserve the residential character of the interior of the neighborhood and the commercial character of South First Street and South Congress Avenue.
- Objective: Preserve the quiet nature of the Dawson neighborhood.
- Objective: Preserve the friendly, family-oriented atmosphere.

Public Health and Safety

2. Improve safety and reduce crime.

- Objective: Enhance community policing activities.
- Objective: Enhance pedestrian safety for school children in the neighborhood.
- Objective: Reduce prostitution in the neighborhood.
- Objective: Reduce burglary in the neighborhood.
- Objective: Maintain and publicize preventive health and human services available to residents of the Dawson Neighborhood.

3. Improve the environment for neighborhood youth.

- Objective: Increase organized activities for youth from the Dawson neighborhood.
- Objective: Develop organized sports leagues for the Dawson Neighborhood and surrounding areas.

Business and Commerce

4. Encourage appropriate business development.

- Objective: Form a Dawson business coalition.
- Objective: Encourage types of new businesses and building types that are compatible with the neighborhood and its other existing businesses.

Critical development issues identified in the Dawson Neighborhood Application:

- Natural Environment threatened.
- Bus stops and bus service needs improvement.
- Crime and other safety concerns.
- Several small projects proposed that represent the potential for major change.
- Zoning does not match land use.

- Dawson
Neighborhood
Application

Councilmember
Comments:

" This concept is one that we should have started a long time ago. This is a very good model, and in this -- in this process looking at it from a distance, it appears to have been very well executed and I think that speaks well for the neighbors, their interest in making their neighborhood a vibrant one and I commend them for it."

- Mayor Pro-tem Garcia at the August 27, 1998 meeting of the City Council adopting the Dawson Neighborhood Plan.

**Councilmember
Comments:**

" I would like to congratulate the neighborhood...on doing a terrific job. They look not just at land use patterns and the character of the neighborhood but they look to crime and disorder... They looked at parks and environment, they had recommendations for Capital Metro and pedestrian safety and other transportation issues... They included businesses and residents, they did surveys, neighborhood referendum... I think it's going to be a good model for the next neighborhoods. Congratulations to the Dawson neighborhood and all the people who helped to put it together"

- Councilmember Bill Spellman at the August 27, 1998 meeting of the City Council adopting the Dawson Neighborhood Plan.

- Objective: Improve aesthetics along the neighborhood perimeter.

5. Increase awareness of the neighborhood's resources.

- Objective: Increase awareness of the businesses in the Dawson neighborhood.

Transportation

6. Improve transportation efficiency and safety, the pedestrian and biking environment and rail opportunities.

- Objective: Establish a North-South pedestrian/bike corridor inside Dawson.
- Objective: Improve the safety, comfort and efficiency of the mass transit serving the neighborhood.
- Objective: Calm and slow traffic in residential areas.
- Objective: Improve traffic and pedestrian safety.

Parks and Environment

7. Improve parks, recreation areas and green space.

- Objective: Improve the safety, access and maintenance of Gillis Park
- Objective: Address lack of parks in south part of neighborhood.
- Objective: Limit the environmental impact of new development, public and private.
- Objective: Establish a permanent library in the Dawson area.

8. Preserve and enhance the natural environment.

- Objective: Improve the natural character of East Bouldin Creek.
- Objective: Reduce litter, water pollution and air pollution in the neighborhood.

The Dawson Neighborhood Plan lists many specific Action Items to achieve these objectives. These action items are marked with arrows and are listed together in the Action Item Tracking Chart found in the Implementation Chapter.

THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Plan Process



Plan Process

Critical Development Issues in Dawson

- Natural environment threatened
- Bus stops and bus service need improvements
- Crime and other safety concerns
- Zoning does not match land use.

- Dawson
Neighborhood
Application

Other Neighborhood Organizations Near the Dawson Neighborhood

- Galindo N.A.
- Bouldin Creek N.A.
- South River City Citizens N.A.
- South Central Coalition

The Dawson Neighborhood Plan followed a process first outlined by the Ad Hoc Neighborhood Planning Committee in 1996. City Council endorsed this approach for neighborhood planning in a 1997 resolution. This process mandated representation of all of the stakeholders in the neighborhood and required active public outreach. During the planning process, the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team gathered information, and solicited input through a variety of means. The planning process had several major components detailed below, including:

- Neighborhood Selection
- Neighborhood Planning Team Meetings
- Collection of Existing Data
- Neighborhood Inventory
- Neighborhood Survey
- Neighborhood Updates

Neighborhood Selection

In June, 1997, the Dawson neighborhood was one of 15 neighborhoods that submitted an application to take part in the City of Austin's Pilot Neighborhood Planning Program. The application was submitted by the representatives of the Dawson Neighborhood Association (DNA), the Austin Police Department and H.E.B. grocery, with the expressed intention to round out the Neighborhood Planning Team if selected.

Although many different aspects of the neighborhood were considered, staff recommended the Dawson Neighborhood be one of the pilot neighborhoods based largely on 4 factors 1) the size of the neighborhood, 2) the demonstrated capacity of the neighborhood association, 3) the history of cooperation DNA had with adjacent neighborhood associations, and, 4) the critical development issues listed in the application.

In August, following staff review and analysis, the Planning Commission recommended the Dawson area be one of three pilot planning areas, and the City Council formally selected the Dawson neighborhood to begin neighborhood planning. After some initial organizing, the representatives of the neighborhood signed a Memorandum of Understanding

with the City of Austin on September 16, 1997. This memorandum outlined the respective responsibilities of the neighborhood representatives and City staff, and officially began the Dawson Neighborhood planning process .

Neighborhood Planning Team

In August, 1997, representatives of homeowners, renters, businesses and non-resident property owners in the neighborhood formed the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team. This planning team held twice monthly open meetings from September through March to gather information and draft the neighborhood plan. Because many issues considered by the Dawson Neighborhood Plan had impacts beyond the boundaries of the Dawson neighborhood, representatives from adjacent neighborhood associations also took part in these meetings. City Neighborhood Planning staff attended the meetings of the Neighborhood Planning Team and its subcommittees to provide administrative and technical support.

Collection of Existing Data

The first task undertaken by the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team was the collection of existing data. City staff assisted with gathering land use, zoning, tax plat, census and other government-tracked information. The Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team assembled the notes and results from several recent workshops and one survey that involved the Dawson neighborhood. These included two South Central Austin Visionary meetings (12/95 and 1/96), a survey of residents conducted by the Dawson Neighborhood Association (3/96), a South Central Coalition planning meeting (4/96), and two meetings of the South Congress Business/Neighbor/Police Coalition (4/96 and 5/96). The Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team reviewed and discussed the results of these previous efforts.

Neighborhood Inventory

In October, the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team conducted a walking inventory of the neighborhood's existing physical conditions. Volunteers, most of them members of the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team, walked every street in the neighborhood, recording the state of sidewalks, streets, lighting and other infrastructure. Neighborhood highlights were marked, such as particularly large trees, or noteworthy homes. Problem areas were also recorded for

The Neighborhood Planning Team

Many different neighborhood interest groups were represented directly on the neighborhood planning team including:

- Homeowners
- Renters
- Large Business
- Small businesses
- Apartment Owners
- Non-resident property owners
- City departments with facilities in the neighborhood

**The Dawson
Neighborhood Survey
Response Rate**

- Residents, Property Owners and Businesses surveyed
- 292 total responses
- 20% overall response rate
- 18% Residential response rate
- 21% Non-residential property owner response rate
- 37% Business response rate

future discussion. The inventory produced maps which were later used to help develop goals, objectives and action items for the plan. The inventory also helped members of the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team become better acquainted with parts of the neighborhood with which they were less familiar.

Neighborhood Survey

After a review of the previous work that had been done in the neighborhood, the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team identified several issues about which they wanted more input from the community. Also, they wanted to be sure that businesses and non-resident property owners had ample opportunity to voice their opinions. In November, the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team wrote and conducted an extensive survey of residents, businesses, and non-resident property owners asking their opinions on a variety of topics that affect the neighborhood. Volunteers went door-to-door through the neighborhood, explaining the neighborhood planning process and interviewing residents. Information packets were mailed to non-resident property owners containing a copy of the survey and a postage-paid return-mail envelope. To make participation as convenient as possible for businesses, they received mailed surveys and were visited by volunteers. This gave businesses the option of completing the survey in person or by mail, whichever was more convenient.

The survey required hundreds of hours of volunteer time. The response rate was excellent. Overall, 20% of the neighborhood surveys were completed. The response rate from resident households was 18%, and 21% for non-resident property owners. The extra work to solicit business input paid off - more than 36% of the business surveys were completed. The survey provided the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team a wealth of information about the issues critical to the neighborhood. In fact, the response rate was so much higher than anticipated the plan was slightly delayed while staff worked to collate the responses.

Response rates were strong across the entire length of the Dawson, and were roughly proportional to the ethnicity of the neighborhood. The survey results were one of the most important resources used by the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team members when they drafted the neighborhood plan goals and objectives.

Neighborhood Updates

The Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team updated the neighborhood residents, businesses, and other interested parties throughout the plan's drafting. The newsletter of the Dawson Neighborhood Association (DNA) reported the plan's progress. The DNA produces a newsletter most months and distributes it to houses and businesses in the neighborhood. The newsletter is also posted at apartment complexes and displayed at public bulletin boards of some local businesses.

In addition to the DNA newsletter, the City's monthly newsletter "At Your Doorstep" contained frequent updates on the Pilot Neighborhood Planning Program in general and the Dawson Neighborhood Plan in particular. On the internet, the progress of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan was posted on the City of Austin's Neighborhood Planning webpage.

Neighborhood Plan Review

After the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team had completed its draft of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan's Goals, Objectives and Action Items, these recommendations were reviewed in a major community meeting, by representatives of the Austin Real Estate Council, and by City departments.

Community Meeting

The first major review of the recommendations of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan by the community at large took place at a workshop held on March 7 at St. Ignatius Church. This major community meeting provided an additional opportunity for input and comment on the first draft of the plan's recommendations. The chair of each subcommittee made a presentation on the major topic areas of the neighborhood plan: Neighborhood Character, Parks and Environment, Business and Commerce, Public Health and Safety, and Transportation. The participants had a chance to ask questions, provide comments and suggestions and to prioritize the numerous objectives of the plan. The Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team incorporated the results of the community meeting into the plan, revising and prioritizing the recommendations.

Plan Review Steps:

- Neighborhood Planning Team review and revisions (Feb-May 1998)
- Community Meeting (March 7, 1998)
- Real Estate Council (March, 1998)
- City of Austin Neighborhood Referendum (March 1998)
- Departmental Review (April - May 1998)
- Planning Commission (May 1998)
- Other City Boards and Commission (May-June 1998)

This is a wonderful effort - comprehensive with input coming seemingly from all parties - commercial, residential, recreational, etc. Continue asking input as the project is being implemented. Making Austin an even better place to live and work and play can only be an investment in our future.

**- Dawson
Neighborhood
Landlord,
comments on the
Referendum
ballot.**

Business Review

At their request, representatives of the Austin Real Estate Council met with members of the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team to discuss the Dawson Neighborhood Plan and to provide additional comment. The meeting participants discussed extensive efforts that had been used throughout the plan to ensure input from the entire neighborhood, especially the neighborhood businesses. These business representatives agreed to explore ways that market forces and their business expertise could be harnessed to effectively implement many of the recommendations of the plan.

City of Austin Departmental Review

Some of the actions in the Dawson Neighborhood Plan call for action from the City of Austin. Departments of the City of Austin reviewed the plan and, wherever possible, provided fiscal estimates for implementation. The departments were also asked to identify funding sources that could be used to implement the action items.

Neighborhood Plan Approval

The Dawson Neighborhood Plan was approved by the community in a neighborhood referendum. Similar to the survey, volunteers delivered copies of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan's recommendations and a ballot to every household in the neighborhood. Staff mailed this same information and ballot to businesses and to non-resident property owners. Over 15% of the ballots were returned and 95% of the returned ballots expressed overall support for the neighborhood plan. Many comments were included with the ballots. These comments were recorded and will be very helpful as the neighborhood plan's recommendations move toward implementation.

Prior to the public hearing before City Council, the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team will present the plan to the Planning Commission. This presentation will provide another opportunity for public input before the Planning Commission makes a recommendation to the City Council on the Dawson Neighborhood Plan.

THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

***Neighborhood
Character***



Neighborhood Character

Dawson Housing

- 1,269 Households
- 2.5 persons/household
- 33% Owner occupied
- 67% Renter occupied

- 1990 U.S. Census

During the neighborhood survey, respondents often stated that the aspect they most wanted to preserve was the character of the Dawson neighborhood. Sometimes they used words like "atmosphere", the "family-orientation", the "friendliness" of the area. Looking at all of the responses, the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team defined three major objectives relating to neighborhood character.

Goal: Preserve the character of the Dawson Neighborhood.

Objectives:

- Preserve the residential character of the interior of the neighborhood and the commercial character of South First Street and South Congress Avenue.
- Preserve the quiet nature of the Dawson neighborhood.
- Preserve the friendly, family-oriented atmosphere.

Residential Land Use

The Dawson neighborhood has clearly defined commercial corridors along South First Street and South Congress Avenue, framing the interior residential portions of the neighborhood. This mix of land uses in clearly defined areas allows the Dawson neighborhood to contain a great variety of mutually supporting land uses. Overall, the zoning reflects the existing land uses, but there are discrepancies. Additionally, there are changes to the Land Development Code the City could make to allow for profitable residential infill in keeping with the overall character of the Dawson neighborhood. The following are specific actions that would support the residential character of the interior of the neighborhood:

Action Items:

- The Planning Commission and City Council should uphold and preserve the residential zoning of the interior of the neighborhood. They should not allow lots outside the Congress and South First Street corridors to be zoned for commercial or more intensive uses.
- City of Austin Neighborhood Planning Staff plans to assist the Dawson Neighborhood Association identifying discrepancies between zoning and actual land use, and

report their findings to the Development Review and Inspection Department.

- In response, the Development Review and Inspection Department should quickly implement fair and effective remedies to instances identified by the neighborhood of land use that is not in compliance with the site's zoning.
- As part of the review that is happening now, the City should amend the Land Development Code to allow smaller residential units on smaller lots and garage apartments.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association will publicize through its newsletter the requirements and restrictions on home based businesses to support very small businesses while still maintaining the residential integrity of the interior of the neighborhood.
- The Development Review and Inspection Department should aid this effort by increasing the enforcement of existing ordinances regarding home-based businesses, with either additional staff, or a reallocation of existing staff.

The Dawson Neighborhood plan also seeks to preserve and support the commercial uses along South First St. and South Congress Ave. The land use and zoning in the commercial areas are discussed later in the Business and Commerce chapter.

Quiet Neighborhood

One of the most appreciated qualities of the Dawson neighborhood is the quiet character of the internal residential areas. Despite its convenient proximity to Downtown, the Dawson neighborhood is overall, a quiet, peaceful place to live. From time to time, there are noise problems, from construction projects, businesses, residents or other sources. The Dawson Neighborhood Association would like to build on its history of working well with the Austin Police Department to address these problems as they arise, and before they become serious. The approach envisioned by this plan is:

Dawson Residential Stability

Among house residents (owners and renters) that responded to the survey:

- 42% have lived in Dawson for more than 10 years.
- 32% have lived in the neighborhood for 3-5 years.

Among apartment renters that responded to the survey:

- 19% have rented in Dawson for more than 10 years.
- 24% have lived in the neighborhood for 3-5 years.

- 1997 Dawson Survey

I like living in the Dawson Neighborhood.

- Strongly Agree - 54%
- Agree - 40%
- Neutral - 4%
- Disagree - 2%
- Strongly Disagree - 0%

- 1997 Dawson Survey, residential responses

Languages in Dawson

Not just English is spoken in homes in the Dawson neighborhood. The number of people and the languages they speak at home include:

- Spanish - 1,474
- English only - 1,387
- Chinese - 22
- German - 6
- Japanese - 4

- 1990 U.S. Census

Action Items:

- The Austin Police Department would provide to DNA the number and sources of noise disturbance reports in the neighborhood over the past year.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association would evaluate the noise information to determine if there are chronic problems in the neighborhood, and give the results to the Austin Police Department.
- Together, the Dawson Neighborhood Association and the Austin Police Department would develop effective remedies to any chronic noise disturbances in the neighborhood.

Friendly Neighborhood

The Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team believed that the Dawson Neighborhood Association was very effective at preserving the friendly, family-oriented atmosphere, and could be even more so.

Action Item:

- The Dawson Neighborhood Association should promote and expand events such as picnics and block parties.

THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Public Health and Safety



Public Health and Safety

Selected Responses from the Dawson Neighborhood Survey:

What kind of crimes concern you the most? (respondents could give more than one answer)

Residents:

- Burglary - 50%
- Prostitution - 37%
- Drugs - 29%

Businesses:

- Prostitution - 77%
- Drugs - 66%
- Graffiti - 57%

Non-Resident Property Owners:

- Burglary - 67%
- Drugs - 47%
- Graffiti - 50%

Other Survey Results:

- 88% of residential responses agreed that crime was a serious problem in the neighborhood.
- 84% of residential responses listed reducing crime as either "Important" or "Very Important"

Based on all of the available comments, surveys and ballots, businesses, residents and property owners are in agreement that the single greatest improvement that could be made to the Dawson neighborhood is to increase safety and reduce crime. The major public health and safety topics addressed by the Dawson Neighborhood Plan are in two goals and five objectives:

Goal: Improve safety and reduce crime.

Objectives:

- Enhance community safety
- Reduce burglary
- Reduce prostitution
- Maintain the preventative public health services available to the neighborhood

Goal: Improve the environment for neighborhood youth.

Objectives:

- Increase the organized activities for youth from the Dawson neighborhood.
- Develop organized sports leagues for the Dawson neighborhood and surrounding areas.

Community Safety

Community safety in the Dawson neighborhood could be increased through, greater police visibility, increased cooperation between residents and police, and improved pedestrian safety for school children. Specific actions recommended include:

Action Items:

- The Dawson Neighborhood Association and the Austin Police Department should work together to revitalize Citizens On Patrol.
- Likewise, DNA and APD should increase the development of Neighborhood Watch Programs and crime prevention programs in the neighborhood.

- The Austin Independent School District should scrutinize existing school boundaries and realign those that cause children to cross busy arterial streets to get home from school where it is feasible to do so. In the Dawson Neighborhood some students must cross South First Street and South Congress Avenue on their way to school.
- The Austin Independent School District should hire crossing guards for Galindo Elementary and paint a marked crosswalk at the intersection of Post and South First Streets until boundaries can be changed.

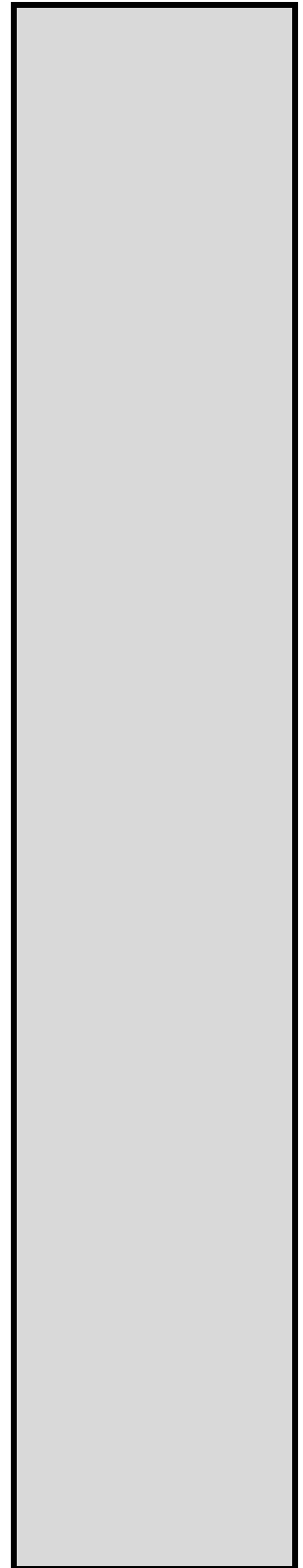
Prostitution

Prostitution, with its associated drug use, is the greatest single crime concern of businesses in the Dawson Neighborhood. The businesses along South Congress Ave are important to the economic health and diversity of the Dawson neighborhood. The neighborhood in general, and businesses along South Congress in particular, are hurt by the ongoing prostitution and drug abuse in the area. Bicycle patrols along the avenue could help reduce illegal activity, and would support the other efforts of the Austin Police Department to reduce prostitution in South Austin.

The Austin Police Department has ongoing efforts to reduce prostitution along South Congress Avenue, and the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team supports those efforts and seeks to work with them. In addition to regular patrols, and periodic stings of prostitutes and their customers, we recommend:

Action Items:

- The Austin Police department could greatly increase their visibility and reduce prostitution and other crime by beginning bicycle patrols of the South Congress area.
- The Austin Police department has recently begun a major grant-funded project targeting prostitution. The Dawson Business Coalition and the Dawson Neighborhood Association should work with the Austin Police department to implement the recommendations of this project.



Immediate Action Needed

A rash of break-ins in the Dawson neighborhood as this plan was being written highlighted the need for strong, immediate action to curb burglary. The Austin Police Department has been working with the burglarized residents to pursue leads and recover property.

Retirement in Dawson

- 10% of the population of Dawson is 65 years old or older
 - 18% of households receive some Social Security income
 - 8% of households receive some retirement income
- 1990 U.S. Census

Burglary

For residents, burglary was a greater overall concern than prostitution. To reduce burglary in the neighborhood, the Dawson Neighborhood recommends the following actions:

Action Items:

- The Austin Police Department should build on the success of their neighborhood center in the Dawson neighborhood. More frequent patrols would increase police visibility in the residential areas.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association plans to schedule a neighborhood meeting targeting theft prevention and property identification. If successful this could become an annual event.
- The Austin Police Department should budget adequately to insure sufficient personnel and computers to track pawnshop inventory tickets quickly. Pawnshop inventory tickets are required by law and are an important tool in the fight against burglary and theft. Currently, these required tickets are turned into the police by pawnshop owners, but the police lack the personnel to enter all of these tickets into their database.

Public Health Assistance

It is important to maintain and publicize preventive health and human services available to residents of the Dawson Neighborhood. Drug use and prostitution are problems in the Dawson neighborhood, as they are in many other areas of the city. Most residents and businesses would like to see these dangerous and illegal activities eliminated, and that is one of the goals of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan. One of the many negative impacts of these high risk behaviors is the increased risk of transmittal of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Attempting to reduce the spread of disease is not in conflict with the eventual elimination of the prostitution and illegal drug use. Additionally, there is a need for more clear information about the many different health and human services that are available. We recommend the following actions:

Action Items:

- Publicize the availability of health and human service at the South Austin Multi-purpose Center through the Dawson Neighborhood Association.

- The Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department should explore the feasibility of providing screening services for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases to persons in the neighborhood engaged in high risk behaviors.
- Establish the South Austin Multi-purpose Center as an eligibility determination "hub" for health and human services which addresses basic and emergency financial assistance needs of residents. There are many different programs available to assist citizens in need. The determination of which programs match a person's eligibility can be confusing and difficult. This could be addressed by having one place where people could determine if they qualify for a wide range of assistance provided by the City and other levels of government.

Youth

During the drafting of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan, many residents expressed a desire to see organized activities for youth from the Dawson neighborhood expanded. Several actions for youth are proposed.

Action Items:

- The Dawson Business Coalition should involve youth organizations with neighborhood businesses.
- The City of Austin should provide adequate staff and operating budget to have on-going and high quality after-school, evening, weekend and summer programs at the South Austin Recreation Center for teens.
- The City of Austin should provide to DNA a complete list of hours, programs, and resources available at neighborhood centers to better promote these programs. Currently, many residents are unaware of the existing programs available at neighborhood centers in the city. If PARD could make available to the Dawson Neighborhood Association a complete list of hours, programs, and resources available at neighborhood centers, it would allow the information to be more widely distributed throughout the neighborhood.
- The Parks and Recreation Department should investigate the addition of a volleyball court in or near Gillis Park, similar to those in Pease Park along Shoal Creek.

Dawson Youth:

- 25% of households have children under 18 years of age.
- 25% of the population 18 years old or younger
- 8% of the Dawson population are teenagers.

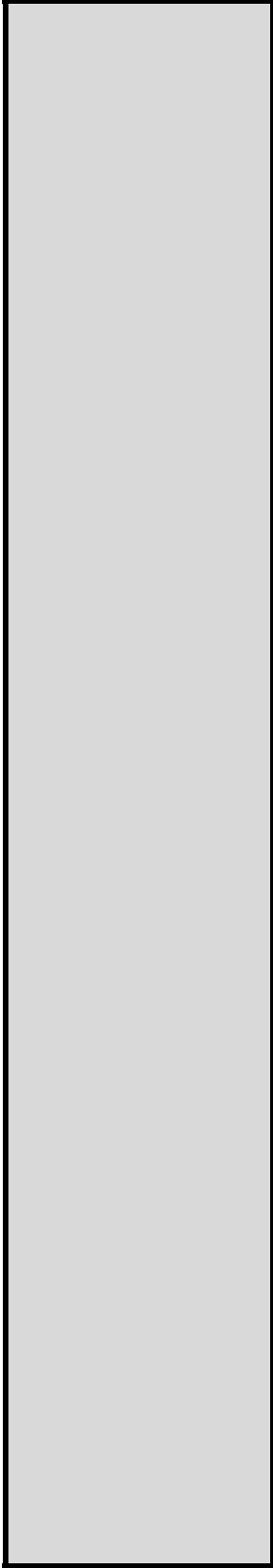
- 1990 U.S. Census

Less than 9% of survey respondents thought there were enough activities for youth in the neighborhood.

- 1997 Dawson Survey

The neighborhood needs more stuff for kids to do. There really isn't a park close [in the southern part of the neighborhood], and there needs to be an arcade or something. It helps keep kids out of trouble.

**- Dawson
Neighborhood
Youth**



- The Dawson Neighborhood Association will contact the Parks and Recreation Department and local leagues and churches to determine the feasibility of expanding sports opportunities for Dawson youth.



THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Business and Commerce



Business and Commerce

New development should strengthen the entire community.

All new development must reflect the neighborhood standards and should be brought to the city only for compliance and facilitation, in keeping with the broad guidelines and overall vision of the community

- From Chaos to Common Ground, April 1996

Business Longevity

50% of businesses in the Dawson area have been there more than 10 years.

20% have been a part of the neighborhood for 3 to 5 years.

30% have been there less than 3 years.

-1997 Dawson Survey

The businesses along South First Street and South Congress Avenue are a vital and contributing part of the Dawson neighborhood. Apartments too are an important part of the mix of the neighborhood. Representatives of apartments, and small and large businesses were part of the Dawson Neighborhood Planning Team throughout the planning process. The Dawson Neighborhood Plan seeks to encourage and promote businesses that are compatible with the neighborhood and the other surrounding businesses.

Goal: Encourage appropriate business development.

Objectives:

- Form a Dawson business coalition.
- Encourage types of new businesses and building types that are compatible with the neighborhood and its other existing businesses.
- Improve aesthetics along the neighborhood perimeter.

Goal: Increase awareness of the neighborhood's resources.

Objective:

- Increase awareness of the businesses in the Dawson neighborhood.

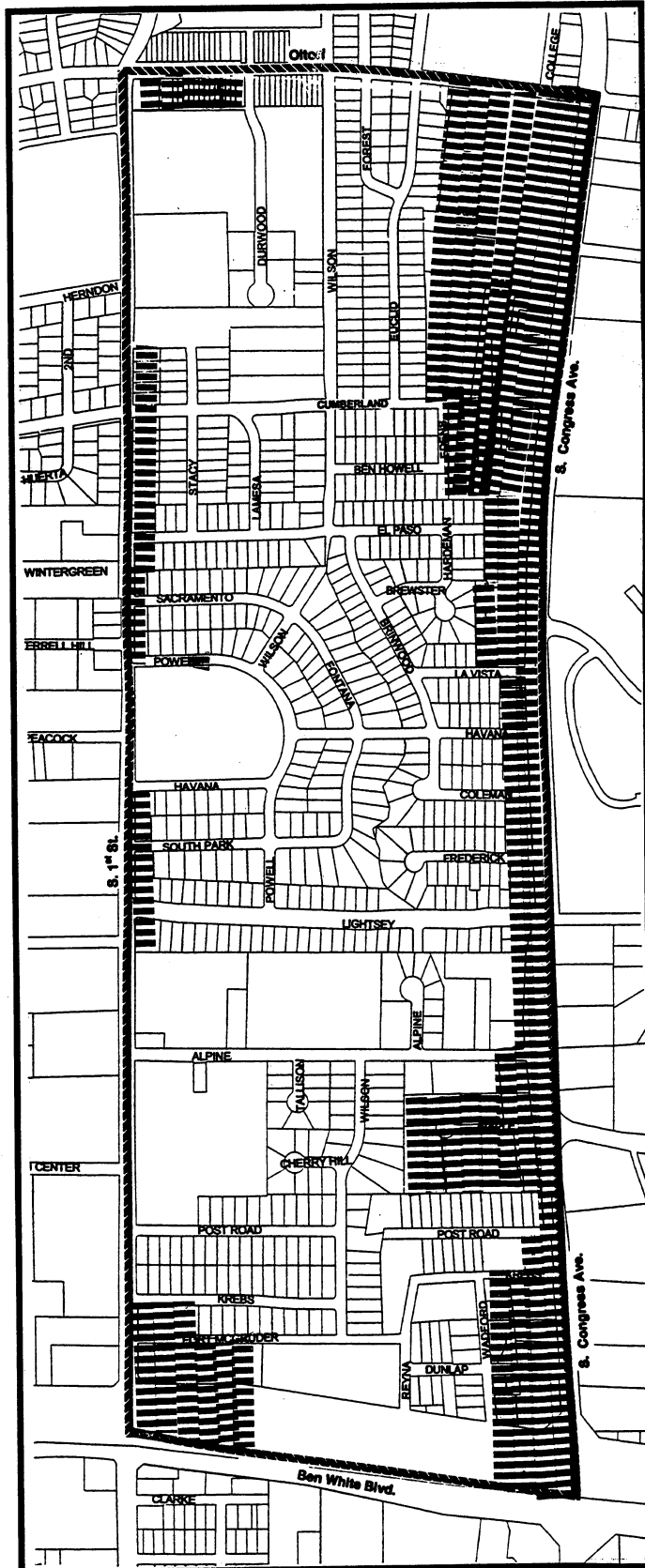
Like businesses, there are other neighborhood resources that need better promotion. The objectives and action items that address increasing the awareness of the neighborhood's resources are discussed in the sections dealing with those areas. For example, an additional sign for Gillis Park is listed in the Parks and Environment chapter.

Dawson Neighborhood Plan

Figure 3: Dawson Neighborhood Commercial Corridors

The shaded areas represent the commercial corridors of the Dawson neighborhood, South First Street and South Congress Avenue. Located along major streets, and within easy walking distances of the neighborhood's houses and apartments, these corridors house a mix businesses serving the needs of the neighborhood and the City as a whole.

Compatibility is important to the continued success the existing businesses in the Dawson neighborhood. New businesses should not be of a type that will detract from established businesses, or the neighborhood as a whole. Compatibility will be especially important as the proposed light rail line along South Congress brings additional development pressures to the area.



Shopping inside Dawson

Based on the 1997 survey most Dawson residents shop inside the neighborhood for:

- Groceries - 82%
- Drug Store - 74%
- Restaurants - 51%

- 1997 Dawson Survey

Shopping Outside Dawson

Based on the survey, most Dawson residents shop outside the neighborhood for:

- Doctor/Dentist - 74%
- Clothing Store - 72%

- 1997 Dawson Survey

The Dawson Business Coalition

Working together with each other and with outside agencies the businesses of the Dawson neighborhood can accomplish more than they could working alone. While it is important for local businesses to build and maintain ties to existing business organizations, a Dawson Business Coalition might be better able to address the needs and concerns unique to this neighborhood. Several business owners in the neighborhood expressed some interest in forming such an organization, and its formation is the key recommendation of the business section of this plan. The action items to encourage business cooperation in the Dawson neighborhood are:

Action Items:

- Interested business owners should form a Dawson Business Coalition.
- Apartment owners and managers should be encouraged to join the Dawson Business Coalition.
- The Dawson Business Coalition should involve St. Edward's University in a study to determine the what and how of new business attraction to Dawson.

Compatibility

Compatibility is an important part of supporting the existing businesses in the Dawson neighborhood, and ensuring the neighborhood remains a good place to live, work and shop. New businesses should not be of a type that will detract from existing businesses. To encourage types of new businesses and building types that are compatible with the neighborhood and its existing desirable businesses we recommend:

Action Items:

- The Dawson Business Coalition will research, publicize and utilize existing programs to help support small businesses.
- The City should prevent the intrusion of industrial land uses into the commercial areas of the neighborhood by upholding commercial zoning.
- The Land Development Code should be amended to allow residential units over commercial establishments in commercially zoned areas.

- An overlay zoning district should be established by the City to prohibit the creation or expansion of businesses that are either over-represented in the neighborhood already, or which do not contribute to a positive commercial environment. The overlay would require a conditional use permit for the following types of businesses:
 - Pawn shops,
 - Pay parking lots,
 - Warehouses,
 - Any industrial use,
 - Adult-oriented businesses,
 - Any use with a drive-through service, and
 - Auto rental, repair, sales storage or washing.

Aesthetics

Keeping the neighborhood clean was an important goal for every segment of the neighborhood that responded to the survey. Not only do improved overall aesthetics of an area promote community pride, it also can contribute to the success of businesses in the neighborhood.

Action Items:

- The Dawson Business Coalition will help businesses find ways to improve aesthetics.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association will publicize via the newsletter the procedure for getting free paint at the Austin Police Neighborhood Center for painting over graffiti.

Promotion

The businesses in the neighborhood meet most of the day-to-day shopping needs of Dawson's residents. Additionally, most businesses draw customers from outside the neighborhood. For some businesses, this is the bulk of their sales. Increased promotion will help the businesses of the Dawson neighborhood thrive. The Neighborhood Planning Team came up with the following actions to help get the word out about Dawson's businesses to the neighborhood and the rest of Austin.

Desired Elements for Commercial Streets in the Dawson Neighborhood:

- Sit-down restaurants
- Apartments above stores
- Children's' Entertainment
- Small Scale Retail Stores
- Live Music Venues
- Parking Behind Businesses

Undesired Elements for Commercial Streets in Dawson:

- Adult-Oriented Businesses
- Pawn Shops
- Large Scale Retail
- Fast Food Restaurants
- Buildings more than 5 stories tall
- Self Storage Warehouses

- From the March 7 1998 workshop.

An Early Success:

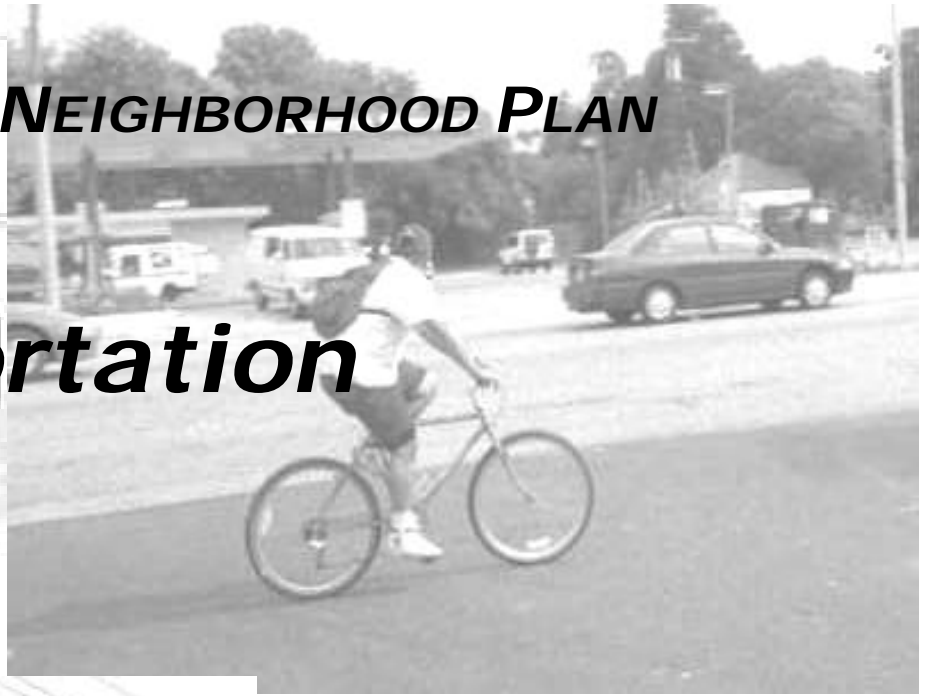
In part due to the cooperation that happened during the writing of this plan, the Dawson Neighborhood Association expanded its rules for membership. The Dawson Neighborhood Association now welcomes not just homeowners and renters, but also people who work or own businesses in Dawson. This newly widened membership will help keep continue the work of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan.

Action Items:

- The Dawson Business Coalition will gain more attention for Dawson businesses through a web page.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association and the Dawson Business Coalition will seek increased press coverage of the improvements to South Congress Avenue.
- Attract youth-oriented businesses.
- The Dawson Business Coalition will assemble and distribute a "Welcome Packet" for new businesses and residents with information about neighborhood businesses and City services.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association will explore expanding the association's newsletter to improve business to business and business to resident information and promotion.
- The Dawson Business Coalition will create, maintain and distribute a Dawson Business directory.
- The Dawson Business Coalition will specify potential future activities that could be coordinated between the Dawson Neighborhood Association and the South Austin's Farmer's Market.

THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Transportation



Transportation

It is convenient for me to get around my neighborhood by bike

- Strongly Agree - 14%
- Agree - 27%
- Neutral - 12%
- Disagree - 13%
- Strongly Disagree - 11%
- Don't Know - 23%

- 1997 Dawson Survey, residential responses

It is convenient for me to get around my neighborhood by Capital Metro

- Strongly Agree - 11%
- Agree - 35%
- Neutral - 10%
- Disagree - 11%
- Strongly Disagree - 5%
- Don't Know - 28%

- 1997 Dawson Survey, residential responses

Every part of Austin is experiencing the growing pains that come with the city's strong economy and overall expansion. More people means more cars on the road, more congestion, and more frustration. As the main roads become clogged with traffic, more people cut through on residential streets, creating safety hazards and undermining the quality of life in the neighborhood. The Dawson Neighborhood Plan seeks to improve transportation efficiency and safety, the pedestrian and biking environment and rail opportunities. The specific goal and its objectives include:

Goal: Improve transportation efficiency and safety, the pedestrian and biking environment and rail opportunities.

Objectives:

- Establishing a North-South pedestrian/bike corridor inside Dawson.
- Improving the efficiency of the mass transit serving the neighborhood.
- Calming and slowing traffic in residential areas.
- Improving traffic and pedestrian safety.

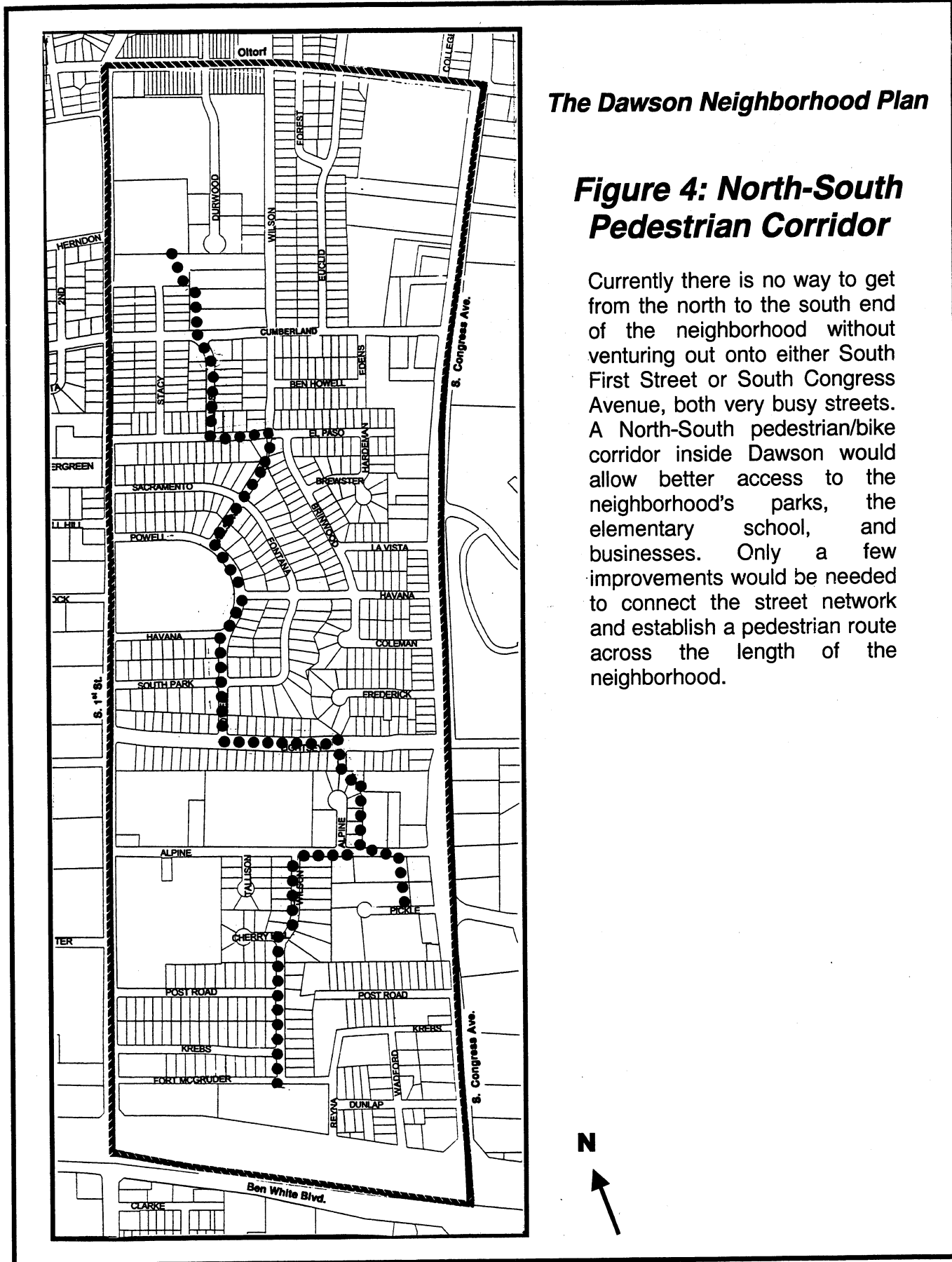
North-South pedestrian corridor

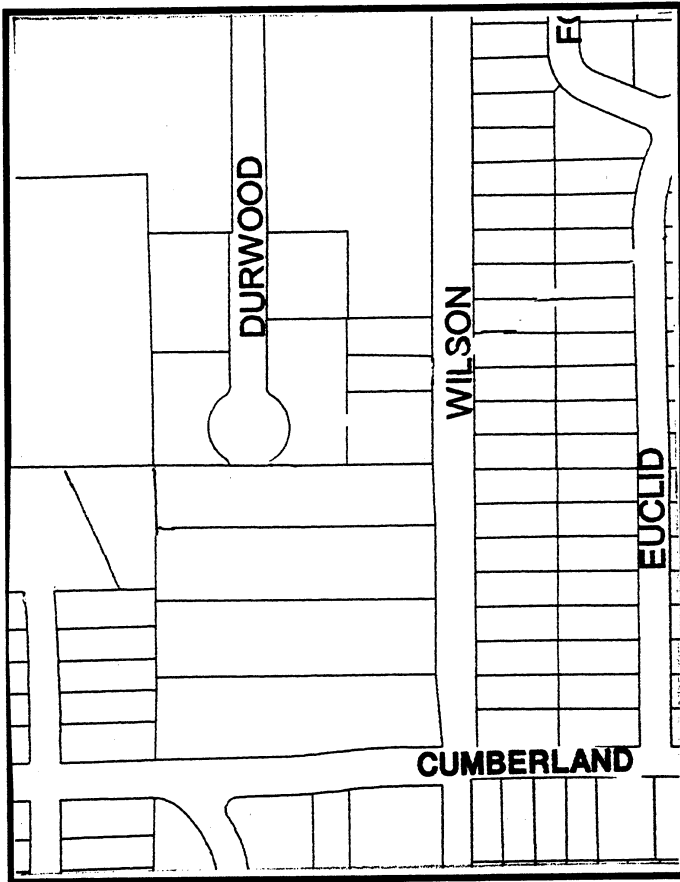
Currently there is no way to get from the north to the south end of the neighborhood without venturing out onto either South First Street or South Congress Avenue, both very busy streets. A North-South pedestrian/bike corridor inside Dawson would allow better access to the neighborhood's parks, the elementary school, and to businesses for residents, especially children. Only a few improvements would be needed to connect the street network and establish a pedestrian route across the length of the neighborhood. These items should be accomplished with the cooperation of property owners. Their concerns should be considered carefully before any implementation.

The Dawson Neighborhood Plan

Figure 4: North-South Pedestrian Corridor

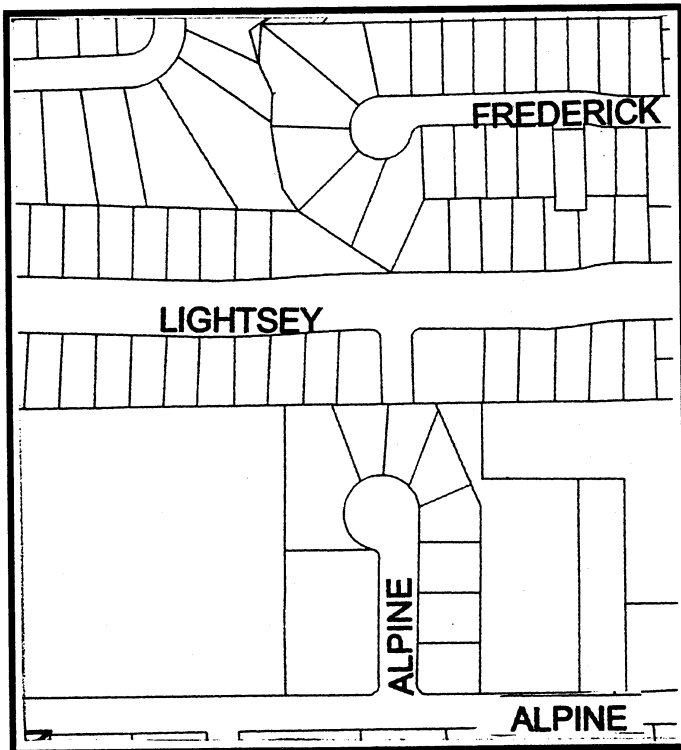
Currently there is no way to get from the north to the south end of the neighborhood without venturing out onto either South First Street or South Congress Avenue, both very busy streets. A North-South pedestrian/bike corridor inside Dawson would allow better access to the neighborhood's parks, the elementary school, and businesses. Only a few improvements would be needed to connect the street network and establish a pedestrian route across the length of the neighborhood.





The Dawson Neighborhood Plan
Figure 5: Strategic Pedestrian Links

The following areas are choke points for a north south pedestrian corridor. There is no pedestrian or bicycle link from Cumberland to the Gillis Park or the South Austin Multipurpose center. Similarly, there is no formal link between Lightsey and Alpine. Strategic negotiations for pedestrian easements or purchases, would allow the linking of existing right-of-ways or sidewalks to form a continuous thoroughfare. Although the neighborhood has approached several of the property owners involved, the support of the City of Austin would be needed before any proposal could be finalized.



Action Items:

- Purchase property to link the neighborhood from Cumberland road to the South Austin Multi-purpose Center and Gillis Park. This proposal was examined by the City of Austin in recent years, but was not enacted.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association will work with the property owner to improve the informal footpath between Wilson and El Paso.
- The City should negotiate with the two homeowners adjacent to the abandoned right-of-way on Lightsey Street to arrange access for pedestrians to Alpine Street.
- The City should negotiate with the owners of the Alpine Grove apartments on Alpine Street at East Bouldin Creek to have the City purchase the wedge of property near East Bouldin Creek and Lightsey.
- The City should consider the purchase of a small portion (roughly 100 sq. ft) of the parking lot of the Alpine Grove apartments on Alpine at East Bouldin Creek.
- The Public Works and Transportation Department should post signs for the pedestrian-bike route once it is established.

Capital Metro improvements

Thirty percent of residents surveyed ride a Capital Metro bus at least once or twice a month, and 10% depend on it for regular commuting. Overall, the Dawson neighborhood is well-served by mass transit. The bus routes along South Congress Avenue and South First Street are often filled to capacity. There are many ways Capital Metro could improve service in the area, increasing safety, comfort and efficiency. Bus stops should be improved, weekend and evening service should be expanded, and Capital Metro should proceed with planning for a light rail line on South Congress Avenue. The specific suggestions that the Dawson Neighborhood plan offers to Capital Metro are:

Action Items:

- Install covered benches and trashcans at all bus stops.
- Build pedestrian-signalized cross walks at or near all bus stops.
- Increase the frequency and hours of evening bus service on South Congress, perhaps with Dillos.

Travelling in Dawson

Based on survey responses, in an average week the following percentages of Dawson residents:

- Drive a car - 94%
 - Ride a bus - 19%
 - Ride a bike for fun or exercise - 19%
 - Ride a bike to work or to run an errand - 9%
 - Walk for fun or exercise - 60%
 - Walk to work or to run an errand - 44%
- 1997 Dawson Survey

A light rail line along South Congress would improve the neighborhood.

- Strongly Agree - 19%
- Agree - 29%
- Neutral - 13%
- Disagree - 16%
- Strongly Disagree-13%
- Don't Know - 9%

- 1997 Dawson Survey, residential responses

- Increase the frequency of weekend bus service on South Congress.
- Increase the speed of buses in Downtown by eliminating some downtown stops.
- Extend the Congress Dillo route to include South Congress, as far as Ben White.
- Add Dillo service on Guadalupe/South First from UT to Ben White.
- Establish a park and ride lot near Ben White & Congress. While commercial parking lots are not appropriate in the Dawson neighborhood, an exception should be made at the railhead of the proposed light rail system. A well designed and constructed parking facility could greatly benefit the City by reducing the number of cars on the road, while not overly impacting the neighborhood.
- Proceed with planning and construction of the South Congress branch of the proposed light rail line.

Traffic calming

Speed humps have been approved for Lightsey between South Congress and South First St. These should be completed as planned. The Public Works and Transportation Department is currently researching traffic calming methods in different pilot neighborhoods in Austin. Based on the results of this work, the most appropriate mix of speed humps or alternative traffic calming measures should be built in the following areas:

Action Items:

- Build speed humps on Lightsey.
- Build speed humps or alternative traffic calming measures on Alpine, Wilson and Euclid.
- Build small traffic circles at the intersections of Havana & Brinwood, Alpine & Wilson and Cumberland & Wilson. At these intersections small traffic circles would slow traffic, preserve the character of the neighborhood and increase traffic safety. These traffic circles should be built in existing right-of-way. The goal is not a major construction, just a small, attractive alternative to a standard perpendicular intersection.
- Place speed limit signs on Alpine, Lightsey and Cumberland. Posted speed limit signs should be posted

as part of the coordinated effort to reduce the speeding on the cross streets in the neighborhood. Alpine, Lightsey and Cumberland are most in need of new speed limit signs.

- Increase enforcement of speed limits on Lightsey, Alpine and Cumberland. Lightsey, Alpine and Cumberland roads are residential streets that run between the major arterials of South Congress Ave., and South First St. Cut-through traffic often travels in excess of the posted speed limit. Increase enforcement of this speed limit, perhaps through the posting of officers on these streets at least once a month, would reduce speeding and increase traffic safety in the neighborhood.

Traffic and pedestrian safety

There are several action items that could directly and immediately improve traffic and pedestrian safety in the Dawson neighborhood.

Action Items:

- The City Electric Utility Department should change the policy for new streetlights to allow a new light to be placed without unanimous consent by addressing individual objections with light shielding. Current policy requires unanimous consent of all the impacted residents and businesses before a new street light can be installed by the Electric Utility Department. The use of light shielding or the blacking out of portions of the light cover would allow greater flexibility. This would allow more street lights to be placed, increasing safety and deterring crime, while still respecting the wishes of all property owners. Examples of light shields can be found in the parking lot of the HEB grocery store at 2400 South Congress. The parking lot is illuminated brightly, and the adjacent homes and back yards are not.
- Whether the policy changes or not, the Dawson Neighborhood Association will publicize via the newsletter the procedure for requesting the installation of new street lights.
- The Texas Department of Transportation should speed the completion of improvements of South Congress by increasing the hours worked. Currently hours are restricted to limit the hours of the noisy construction. However, it is important to the flow and safety of traffic

Views on speed humps:

The following comments were provided on the referendum ballots. Although most respondents support traffic calming in some form, speed humps were the most controversial recommendation of the Dawson plan.

"Cut through traffic has to be slowed before more accidents happen. Speed humps would help."

"I am extremely opposed to any speed bumps in any part of the city in any form or fashion. I know of two accidents caused by speed bumps."

"Only the wealthy neighborhoods get speed bumps."

"I absolutely despise speed bumps. You might as well just put a barbed wire fence."

"Speed humps sound great - They would really help."

"Day after day, people drive through here with no regard for the safety of kids, parents, animals or anything else. People need to know that the street is not a drag strip."

An Early Success:

Following the adoption of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan, the City Council authorized funds and directed staff to pursue purchasing land to help improve the link from the neighborhood to Gillis Park and the Multi-purpose Center.

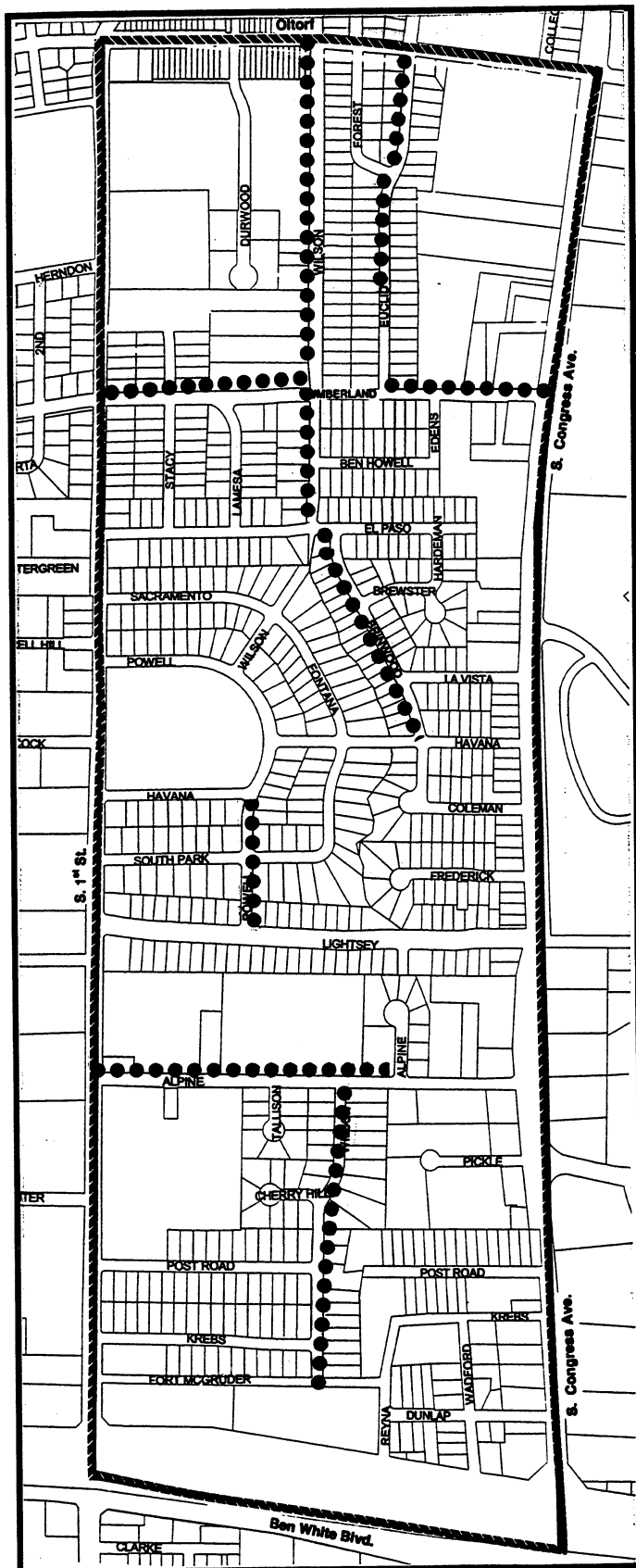
and to the success of businesses along South Congress for construction to be finished as quickly as possible. A petition of residents and business owners has been presented to TxDOT urging them to complete the construction more quickly using additional crews, not overtime.

- The intersection of Alpine Street and South Congress Avenue has particularly poor visibility, especially for traffic attempting to enter Congress from Alpine. The Texas Department of Transportation or the City's Public Works and Transportation Department should take measures to address the problem as part of the ongoing work on South Congress.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association will comment on the recommendations being developed by the consultants hired for the South Congress Improvement Project.
- Poll nearby residents on the desirability of a pedestrian path to the HEB grocery store from Euclid, and submit this poll to HEB for action. HEB has indicated it is willing to install such a path if the near-by property-owners do not object.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Plan identifies areas in the neighborhood that are in need of sidewalks. These have been prioritized in Figure 7. The construction of these sidewalks would provide a much improved pedestrian environment, especially on the busy cross streets, and would help residents in the middle of the neighborhood reach businesses and services on the perimeter.
- The City of Austin should provide funds for the completion of sidewalk modifications along South Congress Avenue and South First Street to bring sidewalks on these streets into compliance with the American with Disabilities Act.

Dawson Neighborhood Plan

Figure 6: Priority sidewalks

The marked streets are areas that are a priority for new sidewalks. Sidewalks on these streets would link existing sidewalks, provide sidewalks where there are currently none, and generally improve the safety of pedestrians in the neighborhood, especially school children.





THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Parks and Environment

Parks and Environment

East Bouldin Creek

- Length - 3.5 miles
- Drainage Area - 1.8 square miles

East Bouldin Creek

Problems:

Water Quality - Fair to Poor

Erosion Potential - High to Very High

Flooding Risk - Low to Very Low

-City of Austin
Watershed Protection
Department

Goal: Improve parks, recreation areas and greenspace.

- Objectives: Improve the safety, access and maintenance of Gillis Park
- Objective: Address lack of parks in south part of neighborhood.
- Objective: Limit the environmental impact of new development, public and private.
- Objective: Establish a permanent library in the Dawson area.

Goal: Preserve and enhance the natural environment.

Objectives:

- Objective: Improve the natural character of East Bouldin Creek.
- Objective: Reduce litter, water pollution and air pollution in the neighborhood.

Parks

The parks and recreational greenspaces in the neighborhood are underutilized. Gillis Park needs safety, access and maintenance improvements, and the south part of the neighborhood does not have a formal park. The following actions by the City's Parks and Recreation department would protect the City's existing investments and improve the recreational opportunities for the neighborhood.

Action Items:

- Provide an additional sign for Gillis Park.
- Increase Park Police patrols after dark in order to enforce the drinking ban and park curfew.
- Rehabilitate and maintain the playscape at Gillis Park.
- Improve the Alpine pond landscaping to make it more useable as a public greenspace.
- Install trashcans along the sidewalks at the Alpine Pond. The Watershed Protection Department is currently

retrofitting the pond at Alpine Street on East Bouldin Creek, adding water quality aspects to its existing flood control role. The landscaping was also greatly improved and a sidewalk has been built along two sides of the pond. The sidewalk is already in use by the neighbors, and is appreciated, as are the other pond improvements. To help maintain the newly improved pond, we recommend that two trashcans be installed at either end of the new sidewalk, and that they be added to a regular schedule of emptying and maintenance.

Natural Environment

Protecting the natural environment was rated as very important by 78% of the respondents to the neighborhood survey. East Bouldin Creek has always been a focal point for the neighborhood.

Action Items:

- The City should increase the enforcement of existing environmental codes and ordinances. There are a large number of automobile related business along South Congress. The water quality of East Bouldin creek could be improved by hiring additional inspectors for the City's Stormwater Discharge Permitting Program to allow for more frequent inspections.
- The City should clarify the Environmental sections of the Land Development Code to standardize interpretations of the code by individual inspectors and reviewers. This would greatly improve businesses' ability to comply with the City's existing regulations.
- Create a City of Austin "Environmental Liaison" position to coordinate responses to the environmental concerns of citizens. If these responsibilities are already part of an existing position, that role should be more publicized.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association will share survey data about creek-side residents interested in native landscaping with City of Austin staff working with the new "Grow with the Flow" program.
- The Dawson Neighborhood Association will promote and expand DNA creek clean-ups.
- In order to reduce litter in the neighborhood, especially along South First Street and South Congress Avenue,

East Bouldin Creek is an asset for the Dawson Neighborhood.

- Strongly Agree - 36%
- Agree - 32%
- Neutral - 13%
- Disagree - 5%
- Strongly Disagree - 3%
- Don't Know - 11%

- 1997 Dawson Survey, residential responses

An Early Success:

The most expensive single action item of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan will be included on the November 3, 1998 Bond Election for consideration by the voters of Austin.

Proposition No. 4:

The issuance of \$46,390,000 in tax supported General Obligation Bonds for constructing, improving and equipping libraries, museums, and cultural centers and related facilities and acquiring land and interests in land and property necessary to do so; and the levy of a tax sufficient to pay the bonds...

Two 10,000-square-foot branch libraries would be constructed: One in the Crestview area of North Austin ... and the other in South Central Austin to replace the Twin Oaks Branch Library, 2301 S. Congress Ave., Suite 7. Both facilities are currently in leased space.

From the Nov 3 Bond Election Ballot.

the Dawson Neighborhood Association will continue to work closely with "Keep Austin Beautiful".

- The City should do what it can to increase enforcement of City and State air quality ordinances.

Library

The branch library serving South Central Austin is in leased space at the Twin Oaks shopping center at Oltorf and South Congress. This branch library has been in leased space longer than any other branch library in Austin.

Action Item:

- A permanent location should be built for the Twin Oaks Library near the present location. This should be built prior to the construction of a new downtown library.

THE DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Implementation



Implementation

Comments from the Mayor:

" Part of what needs to occur, in order to make Smart Growth work in this community is there has to be this neighborhood component...The policy makers and the professional planners may talk about where and what goes in certain places, but it's the neighborhoods that have to come in and tell us how that occurs. I think this process at least with Dawson neighborhood has shown that it works and this vote is an indication of very strong support and a belief in what the neighborhood has done."

- Mayor Kirk Watson at the August 27, 1998 meeting of the City Council adopting the Dawson Neighborhood Plan.

By adopting the plan, the City Council will demonstrate the City's commitment to the plan's implementation. However, every action item listed in this plan will require separate and specific implementation. Adoption of the plan does not on its own begin the implementation of any item. Approval of the plan does not legally obligate the City to implement any particular action item. The implementation will require specific actions by the neighborhood, the City and by other agencies. The Neighborhood Plan will be supported and implemented by:

- City Boards, Commissions and Staff
- City Departmental Budgets
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Other Agencies and Organizations
- Direct Neighborhood Action

City Boards, Commissions and Staff

The numerous boards and commissions of the City will look to the Dawson Neighborhood Plan when they need guidance about the neighborhood. The Parks and Recreation Board will have a guide available stating the neighborhood's priorities for parks and open space. The Planning Commission will already know if a proposed zoning change in Dawson would be appropriate and supported by the residents and businesses of the neighborhood. Additionally City staff will use the plan as a guidance document for review of projects and programs.

Department Budgets

Each year every City department puts together a budget that states the department's priorities for the coming year. By bringing the strengths and desires of the neighborhood to the attention of City departments, the Dawson Neighborhood Plan will help them prioritize those projects that help safeguard the neighborhood's assets while addressing its needs.

Capital Improvement Projects

There may be issues in the neighborhood that require a major capital expenditure. In these instances the guidance provided by the plan will be critical to guarantee the project

will proceed in a fashion that keeps in mind the overall long term interests of the neighborhood.

Other Agencies and Organizations

Other agencies and organizations outside City government will play a key role in the implementation of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan. As these agencies look for public input, the Dawson Neighborhood Plan will be available as a clearly articulated vision of the direction the neighborhood desires to go.

Direct Neighborhood Action

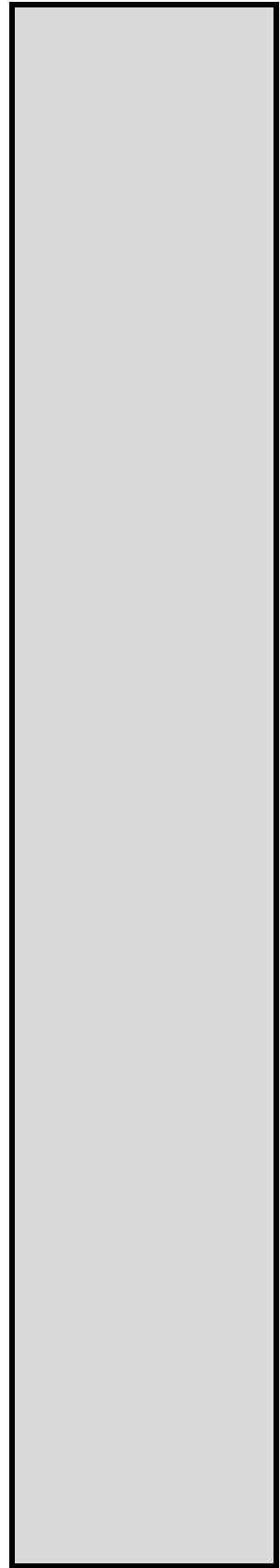
Some of the elements of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan will be implemented by direct neighborhood action, possibly with some City support. Neighborhood clean-ups, graffiti abatement, and a citizens' crime watch are a few examples of projects that might best be accomplished by the neighborhood.

Schedule of Implementation

The implementation of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan will be monitored. Some items are expected to be completed quickly. For others, especially those items that need additional funding, it may be harder to schedule a firm completion date. Nevertheless, the status of every item proposed in the Dawson Neighborhood Plan, the status will be tracked. A check date, if not a completion date, will be set for each item. This tracking chart will be updated regularly as more information becomes available and as the status of projects change. An update report is scheduled for the Fall of 1998 to summarize the overall implementation status of the plan's recommendations.

Updating the Dawson Neighborhood Plan

Neighborhoods are dynamic. To be effective, a neighborhood plan must be periodically updated to reflect changes in the neighborhood. The Dawson Neighborhood Plan will undergo regular review every 6 months. A subcommittee of the neighborhood planning team will conduct this review, updating the status of the action items and considering additions or amendments. Just as the full neighborhood planning team represented the diverse interests of the neighborhood, the updating subcommittee should include representatives of homeowner, renters, businesses and non-resident property owners.



The Action Item Tracking Chart:

Included in the back pocket of this report is a chart tracking the status of each proposed action item. This chart will be updated periodically, and a new copy sent out to everyone who has requested a copy of the Dawson Neighborhood Plan.

Over time, a neighborhood plan may need more changes to stay current then would be appropriate for a small subcommittee to make. How often this will be necessary depends on how much conditions have changed in the neighborhood. Overall, it seems that a neighborhood plan, with any needed changes, should be re-approved and re-adopted every 5-7 years.

Tracking Implementation

The Dawson Neighborhood Plan Action Item Tracking Chart (figure 7, included in the back pocket) provides means to easily check the status of the implementation of the plan. For each action proposed in the plan, the chart lists the contact, the estimated cost, the priority, the schedule, the current status and the next needed action. This chart will be updated as the status of projects changes and as new information is available.

