



traffic report:

safety concerns of the heritage neighborhood
austin, texas — march 2005



HERITAGE
NEIGHBORHOOD
ASSOCIATION

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introduction

The Heritage Neighborhood Association is concerned about traffic and safety in our neighborhood. We are concerned about the safety of driving through our neighborhood, the safety of bicyclists, the safety of pedestrians, and the safety of our children.

Our neighborhood is small, dense, bounded by several major roads, and pedestrian rich. Our vision is to have a pedestrian-friendly and safe neighborhood while we face growing traffic pressures and denser development.

The purpose of this document is to (1) note the current and future traffic issues that concern our neighborhood and (2) request that the City develop a Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan for our neighborhood. If the City will not develop this plan, we then seek guidance on how the neighborhood can use money set aside from new developments for traffic calming.

our neighborhood

Our neighborhood is located northwest of The University of Texas at Austin ([figure 1](#)) between West 38th Street on the north, West 29th Street on the south, Lamar Boulevard on the west, and Guadalupe Street on the east ([figure 2](#)). Our neighborhood is three blocks wide and six blocks long. The neighborhood is included in Census 2000 tract 2.04, which had 2,737 residents in 1990 and 2,872 residents in 2000¹. Density in the neighborhood on a tract level in 2000 is 5 to 10 people per

¹ Census Tract 2.04 includes the Heritage Neighborhood, the area west of the neighborhood up to Shoal Creek, and the area between Shoal Creek and Lamar Boulevard and 45th Street and 38th Street west of Central Market.



acre. On a block level, densities in some parts of the neighborhood are greater than 15 people per acre.

pedestrian destinations in our neighborhood

Residents within the Heritage neighborhood choose an urban lifestyle. We use public transportation and walk to neighborhood restaurants, retailers, and grocer stores. Many of us work or attend school in adjacent areas. For us, Central Austin is more than a place to commute to; it's our home. We live here, and more and more of us are raising our children here.

Popular destinations in our neighborhood include:

- grocery stores like Wheatsville Coop, Central Market, and Randalls;
- bus stops for the most popular bus routes;
- numerous restaurants and shops;
- daycare centers;
- The University of Texas at Austin,
- medical centers such as Seton Hospital, the Heart Hospital of Austin, and affiliated doctors' offices, and
- the Shoal Creek hike and bike trail.

Our neighborhood
is pedestrian rich.

roads in our neighborhood

Our neighborhood is bounded by some of the most heavily traveled roads in Austin. No other residential neighborhood must deal with this high volume of traffic within such a small area. According to the city's classification, our neighborhood is bounded by three arterials: West 38th Street, Lamar Boulevard, and Guadalupe Street (figure 2, table 1). A collector, West 29th Street, forms our other boundary while three other collectors, West 30th Street, West 34th Street, and the western part of West



37th Street, divide the neighborhood (figure 2, table 1). The city classifies the remaining streets in the neighborhood as residential. King Lane and our alleyways were not considered in the database (figure 2, table 1).

The arterials that bound our neighborhood have some of the heaviest non-highway traffic in Austin. The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) conducts traffic counts on city roadways, including several roads that bound the neighborhood (table 2). Recent vehicle counts show about 28,600 vehicles per weekday on Guadalupe Street and upwards of about 32,000 vehicles per weekday on Lamar Boulevard. Vehicle counts along Lamar and Guadalupe along our neighborhood rank in the top 4 percent of the 1,148 counts CAMPO has made on non-highways around Austin. Streets with comparable vehicle counts include Congress Avenue (100 block), Rundberg Lane West (100 block), William Cannon Drive West (3800 block), and Cesar Chavez Street West (700 block). Streets with much greater vehicle counts include Riverside Drive East (~45,000 vehicles), William Canon Drive East (~47,000 vehicles), and Parmer Lane (~58,000 vehicles).

Some of the busiest streets in Austin border our neighborhood

traffic concerns in our neighborhood

The neighborhood has several concerns about traffic and pedestrian safety. These include:

west and 32nd & west and 31st

Neighbors have noted several accidents, and innumerable near misses, that have occurred at West Avenue and 32nd Street and West Avenue and 31st Street. West





Avenue does not have stop signs except at 34th Street and where West butts into 30th Street. Accidents and near misses probably occur at these intersections because of three reasons: (1) cut-through traffic assumes there are four-way stops at these intersections; (2) sightlines are reduced by parked cars, utility poles, and topography; and (3) people are in a hurry to cross between Guadalupe and Lamar.

30th street

Combined with no stop signs and a newly paved surface, 30th Street will be a tempting cut-through for traffic. This is of particular concern to the neighborhood because of several families with young children as well as a daycare facility that face 30th Street.

cut-through traffic

Cut-through traffic generally occurs during rush hour when commuters, frustrated with the lack of flow on Guadalupe or Lamar, cut through the neighborhood, generally on collectors which do not have many stop signs. These drivers, already agitated by traffic, tend to zoom through the neighborhood.

no sidewalks

Parts of the neighborhood have no or poor sidewalks (figure 3). As a result pedestrians, particularly folks with strollers and small children on tricycles and bicycles, are forced to walk in the street. Few usable sidewalks, combined with sub-standard sized residential lots and a lack of a neighborhood park, means that children's play spills over into the street. Our neighborhood is in the midst of experiencing a baby boom with at least eight children born in the last four years and three more expected by the end of summer. A lack of sidewalks is a deep concern of neighborhood parents.

guadalupe and 31st

A mixed-use development is planned for Guadalupe and 31st streets. This development will have about 5 businesses and 40 apartments. Primary access to parking for this project will be



on 31st Street. Drivers exiting the development will be tempted to turn into the neighborhood on 31st Street to avoid Guadalupe Street. Thirty-first Street is a residential street with limited width and limited sidewalks. Traffic that enters the neighborhood through 31st Street will likely diffuse onto King Street, Washington Square, or West Avenue. Neighborhood negotiations with the developer have resulted in \$30,000 for traffic calming to address neighborhood traffic concerns.

Families with children and a daycare center face busy streets.

This is an issue that will likely grow along Guadalupe Street as additional mixed-use development is constructed in future years.

king street and washington square

King Street and Washington Square are other favorite targets of cut-through drivers. Much of this traffic probably results from rush-hour traffic avoiding Guadalupe and Lamar by coming up Rio Grande and driving through Washington Square and King Street to get to 34th Street. Pizza delivery cars seem to love King Street

king street and 32nd street

This is another intersection that has experienced its share of accidents from cut-through traffic (two of which occurred while writing this report!). More than 20 years ago, no parking signs were placed on one side of this intersection after an elderly resident's car was smashed by a speeding delivery vehicle. Bicyclists, a number testing bikes from Ozone, have also had to dodge speeding traffic on 32nd.

33rd street

Rush hour traffic (people avoiding the light at 34th and Guadalupe) and large trucks (including tractor-trailer) use this street as a cut-through. The intersection at 33rd and King Street hasn't had a stop sign in years. Neighbors have had phone and cable lines ripped from houses and poles for years.



west street between 34th and 38th

A sliver of our neighborhood, surrounded by office and retail, rests between 34th and 38th streets. Cut-through traffic, especially on West Avenue, is a concern with neighbors. West Street is capped to the north by an entrance to Central Park, home to the Heart Hospital and Central Market, two new four-story office buildings, and another proposed building. Sidewalks on this stretch of West Street are spotty.

Non-resident parking

Because of our proximity to the university, students park cars in the neighborhood near Guadalupe and take the bus to class. These cars reduce site distances and increase the risk of accidents.

the growing neighborhood

As Austin grows, so grows our neighborhood. The fringes of our neighborhood are being redeveloped with greater density of office and business space and greater density of residences. Our northern border with 38th Street has already seen the construction of two four-story office buildings with more development expected. A mixed use development along Guadalupe Street is planned with more to come, perhaps at Half-Price Books and Wheatsville. Even inside the neighborhood, properties are becoming more dense.



With density comes more traffic, and with more traffic comes more safety concerns. The neighborhood worked with the city, through its neighborhood plan, to protect the residential character of the inner parts of the neighborhood while allowing greater density on the fringes (figure 4). We would like to work with the city to address traffic and pedestrian concerns as our neighborhood grows.



our understanding of the neighborhood traffic calming program

Based on information from the City's web page and discussions with city staff, we understand the following about the neighborhood traffic-calming program:

The mission of the neighborhood traffic-calming program is to enhance neighborhood safety and livability by working closely with neighborhoods to develop and implement innovative and effective transportation solutions in our residential areas. The program provides a process for identifying and addressing problems related to speeding motorists, excessive traffic volumes and overall concern for safety on residential streets. Residents participate in developing and evaluating the various requirements, benefits and trade-offs of Traffic Calming projects within their own neighborhood and become actively involved in the decision-making process.

The process the city uses for neighborhood traffic calming is to:

- survey all residents, businesses, and property owners;
- brainstorm and prioritize traffic problem locations;
- conduct area-wide data collection;
- evaluate collected data;
- discuss data collection results;
- brainstorm possible solutions;
- develop proposed Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan; and
- vote.

The city implements the traffic-calming plan if the plan is approved by 60 percent of ballots. City staff and a Working Group of neighborhood residents carry out the above steps.



A number of different tools can be used to calm traffic, including speed humps, speed cushions, traffic circles, chicanes, semi-diverters, and curb extensions. The City no longer installs speed humps because of their effects on emergency services but still considers the rest of the tools listed above.

According to the City's web page and a recent article in the Austin American Statesman, the City has not funded the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program since 2001.

our request

Based on our concerns for the safety of pedestrians in our neighborhood and the safety of our children, we request that the City develop a Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan for our neighborhood. We believe that our situation may be unique in that we have money that could be used to help implement traffic calming measures in our neighborhood. As part of negotiations with new developments, we ask for money to be set aside for traffic calming measures. At present, we have \$30,000 to implement traffic calming. It may be possible to use this money to help fund a Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan.

We have money to help implement a traffic calming plan.

If the City no longer supports traffic calming, then we request a discussion on how the neighborhood can spend these funds. Perhaps the neighborhood itself can implement traffic calming (with City approval), stop signs, signs that indicate that cross traffic does not stop, or use the money to create neighborhood thresholds.



We understand that we live near the center of a bustling city and therefore can not expect only local traffic to use our streets. However, we would like to encourage non-neighborhood traffic to travel along more appropriate streets such as 29th, 34th, 38th, and Guadalupe Streets and Lamar Boulevard.



conclusions

Many people live in our neighborhood because of its proximity to downtown and urban lifestyle. However, it can be dangerous driving, bicycling, or walking in our neighborhood because of cut-through traffic, long straight-aways, and piecemeal sidewalks. Our small neighborhood is bounded by two of the busiest streets in Austin with more development planned for our fringes. Neighbors have a number of concerns about traffic in our neighborhood including traffic too fast for our streets and the safety of our children. We respectfully ask the City to develop a Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan for our neighborhood. If the City no longer supports traffic calming, then we request a discussion on how the neighborhood can spend neighborhood funds on traffic calming.



useful and interesting links

Heritage Neighborhood Association Web Page:

<http://www.main.org/heritage/>

City of Austin, Transportation Division:

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/roadworks/default.htm>

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program:

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/roadworks/tc.htm>

Traffic calming options:

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/roadworks/toolbox.htm>

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization:

<http://www.campotexas.org/>

Project for Public Spaces site on traffic calming:

<http://www.pps.org/trans/info/livememtraffic>



Table 1: Street classifications in the Heritage Neighborhood.

<u>Street</u>	<u>Street Type</u>
29 th Street West.....	collector
29 ½ Street West	residential
30 th Street West.....	collector
30 ½ Street West	residential
31 st Street West.....	residential
31 ½ Street West	residential
32 nd Street West.....	residential
34 th Street West.....	collector
35 th Street West.....	residential
37 th Street West.....	residential, collector
38 th Street West.....	arterial
Grandview Street.....	residential
Guadalupe Street.....	arterial
King Lane	not considered
King Street.....	residential
Lamar Boulevard.....	arterial
Maiden Lane.....	residential
Owen Avenue	residential
Pearl Street	residential
Rio Grande Street.....	residential
Ronson Street	residential
San Gabriel Street.....	not classified
Washington Square	residential
West Avenue	residential

*Source: http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/streets/protected_status.htm
Street and Bridge Division, City of Austin*



Table 2: Vehicles counts in or near the Heritage Neighborhood.

Location	Number of vehicles	Date of count
34th St West, 1500 block - East of Kerbey Ln.....	2,757	04/27/04
Guadalupe St, 3100 block - South of W. 31st 1/2 St.....	28,592	03/31/03
Guadalupe St, 3200 block - North of W. 32nd St.....	28,010	09/19/01
Guadalupe St, 3200 block - North of W. 32nd St.....	27,861	09/17/02
Guadalupe St, 3300 block - North of W. 33rd St.....	20,940	02/09/00
Guadalupe St, 3400 block - North of W. 34th St.....	26,890	09/19/01
Guadalupe St, 3500 block - North of W. 35th St.....	28,556	03/31/03
Lamar Blvd North, 2800 block - South of W. 29th St.....	29,583	04/01/03
Lamar Blvd North, 2800 block - South of W. 29th St.....	30,357	09/17/02
Lamar Blvd North, 3200 block - North of W. 32nd St.....	32,012	09/17/02
San Gabriel St, 2800 block - South of W. 29th St.....	1,035	10/15/03
West Ave, 3200 block - North of W. 31st St.....	857	09/02/03

Source: <http://www.campotexas.org/Excel/24HourMid-Block.xls>

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Database accessed in December 2004.

Note that the 34th Street West count is outside the neighborhood.

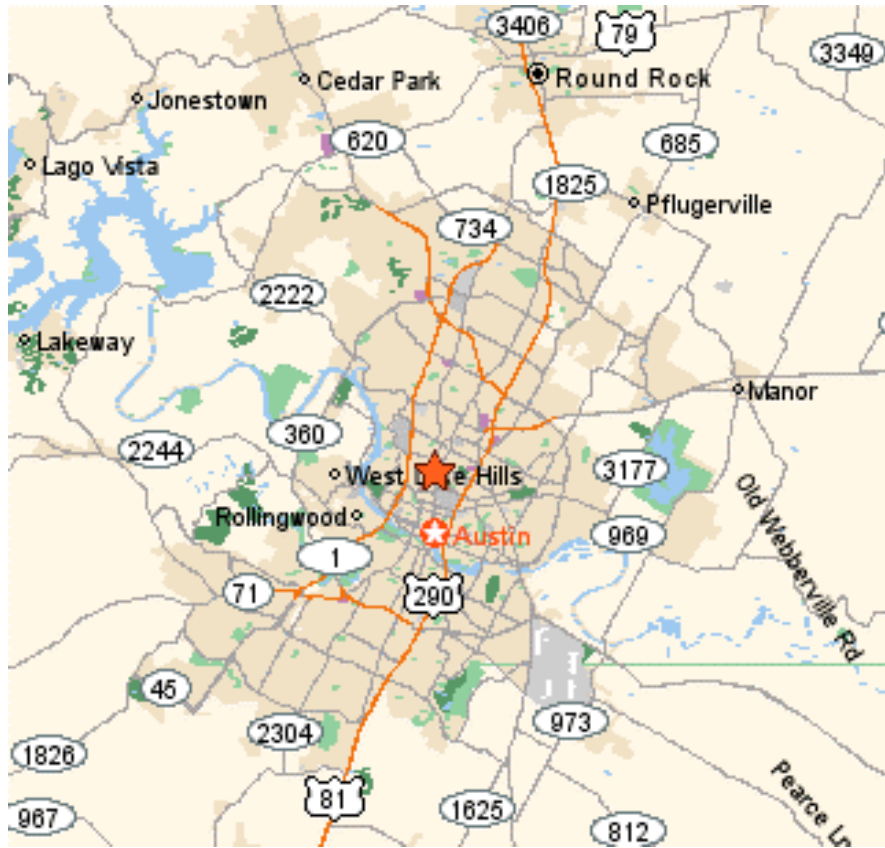


Figure 1: Map of Austin, Texas, showing, with a red star, the location of the Heritage Neighborhood.



Figure 2: Map of neighborhood and location of street types and traffic signals.

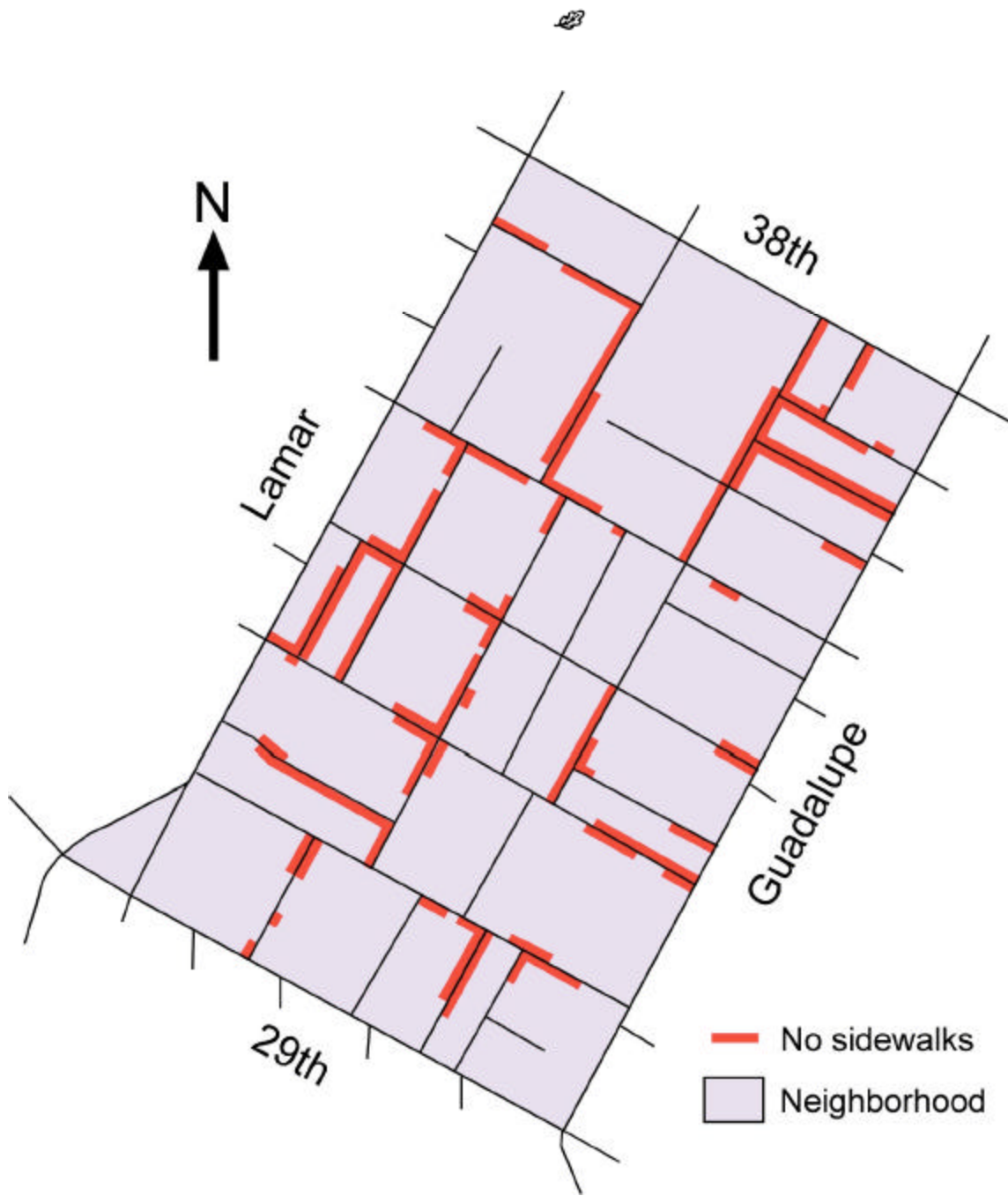


Figure 3: Location of missing or damaged sidewalks in the neighborhood. Sidewalks are being installed along 30th Street associated with infrastructure work on the street.

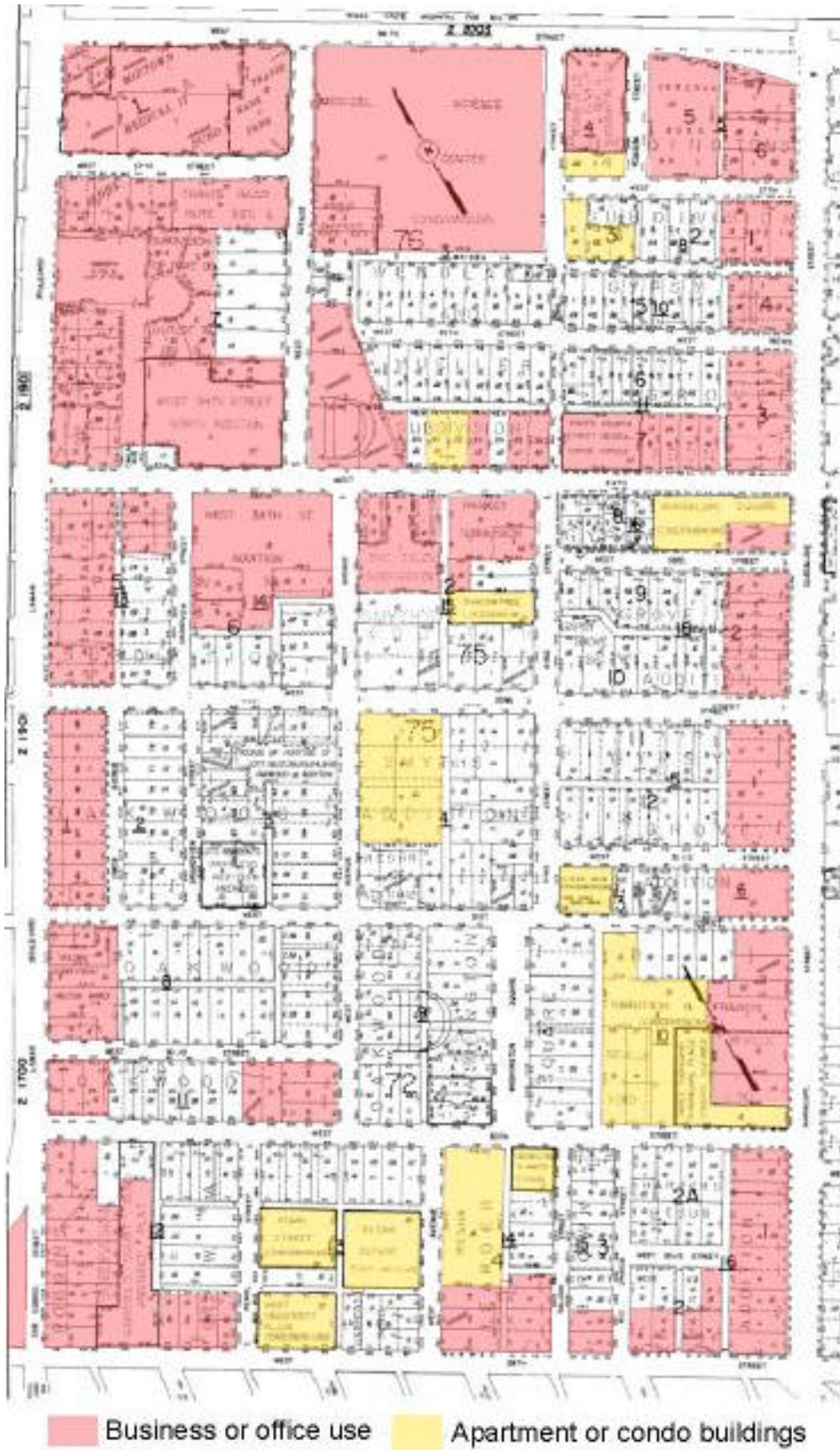


Figure 4. Map of land use in the neighborhood.