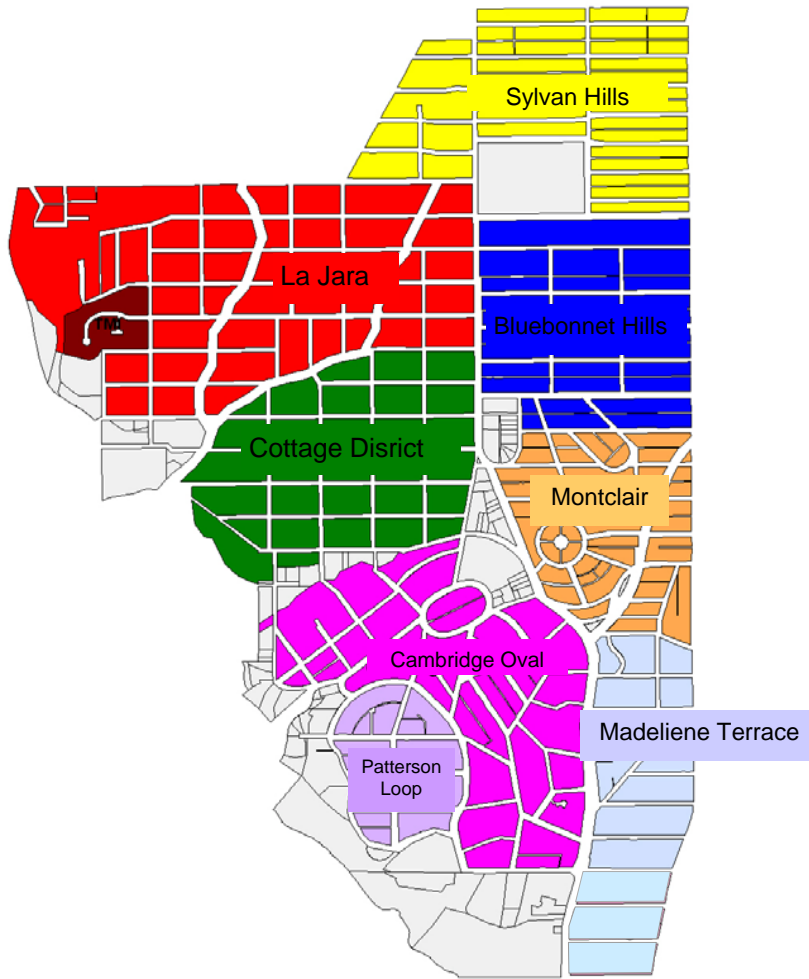


Private Realm



Neighborhoods Map

While the Public Realm acts as the skeleton for Alamo Heights, the Private Realm provides the muscle of the community and is divided into five zones: Single-Family, MFD Neighborhood, MFD Transition, MFD Live/Work and Commercial Corridor.

Single-Family Zone

Existing Character

Alamo Heights is a unique place with a special character. Driving or strolling down its streets provides a sense of seamlessly moving from one neighborhood into another. Although most will recognize that a change has occurred, it is often difficult to pinpoint exactly what has changed. To better understand the neighborhoods of Alamo Heights, a street by street survey was conducted for each neighborhood to identify distinct characteristics and document conditions that contribute to the feel and sense of place created within each one. A central part of managing development and growth is to ensure that any change respects the unique character and qualities that make up Alamo Heights. Documenting and quantifying what already exists is the first step to understanding what is important.

A Survey of Single Family Residential Neighborhoods

Sylvan Hills

This neighborhood is consistent in terms of scale, street widths, lot size and building types. Asbestos tiles and wood siding are the predominant building material. Most houses are variations of the traditional ranch style and were built in the post-War years of the 1940's and 1950's. The dominant characteristics are one story houses with low plate heights, on relatively



large lots. More modest Minimal Traditional styles are located on the northern edge of the neighborhood, which include houses that are slightly smaller in scale.

Blue Bonnet Hills

Topography plays an important role in differentiating this neighborhood from others. Houses are set well above the street in many cases and large retaining walls separate the public realm of streets and sidewalks from the front yards of homes. The retaining walls are almost always stone, while the predominant building materials of the neighborhood are both stone and brick. Wood siding and stucco comprise the balance of neighborhood housing reflecting styles popular in the 1920's. Most of these houses are accessed from



the rear through alleys, which contain all of the utilities in the neighborhood.

Montclair and Madeliene Terrace



This area is very diverse in terms of scale. Although it is consistently zoned multi-family, it includes a wide variety of housing types, lot sizes and topography. This area has had a significant number of replacement housing units constructed over the years, creating conflicts between the single family residences and the new multi-family infill projects. Because a significant portion of this area is bounded by Broadway and Austin Highway to the west and New Braunfels to the east, there has been a proliferation of surface parking lots near Broadway and a significant erosion of the original housing stock throughout. Historically, the replacement housing does not relate well to the existing character of the street.

La Jara Neighborhood

The area is notable for its tree canopy, wooded drainage way and substantial homes constructed primarily of stone, brick and stucco on heavily wooded lots. Live Oaks trees are predominant. Landscaping is more lavish and extensive than in other parts of the city, and the front yards, typically, have more permeable surface than any other neighborhood in Alamo Heights. Stylistically the homes are eclectic, rambling and were built over a large time period reflecting the styles of the 1920's, the 1950's and even the 1990's. A number of houses in this neighborhood take advantage of the change in topography over the Olmos Basin with unusual lot shapes, and spectacular views.



Cottage District

The scale and materials of the housing is what distinguishes the Cottage District from other Alamo Heights neighborhoods. The houses are smaller in scale than the rest of Alamo Heights and most of the homes were originally built as one story, with detached garages and parking in the rear. Less than a third of the homes are two story, which tend to be originally have been single-story homes that have had second-story additions. Almost no houses exceed two story. Wood siding is used on almost half the houses. Asbestos shingles make up another fifth. Stucco, stone and brick account for less than a tenth of the houses.



Cambridge Oval /Patterson Loop

Topography is the one of the major characteristics of this neighborhood that distinguishes it from all others. There is a dramatic rise from Broadway with a sudden drop in elevation near the Olmos Basin. The street layout is more organic, following the natural contours. The lots are primarily large and irregular in shape, giving the area another distinguishing characteristic.



Houses tend to be substantial in this area, although no one style predominates. This area has the most parking in the front yard set-backs, and more than one in ten homes have front yard fences or retaining walls. Large trees and landscaping is often used in this area to separate the front yards from the public realm.

Changes to Single-Family Residential Development Standards

There is more diversity among the neighborhoods of Alamo Heights than is reflected in the current Residential Development Standards (RDS). While the width of a lot does play an important role in regulating different characteristics; height, number of stories, set-backs, floor-to-area-ratio (FAR) and lot coverage vary greatly from neighborhood to neighborhood. The regulations should be amended to reflect these differences. New construction should be more contextual within the surrounding neighborhood.

Action Step

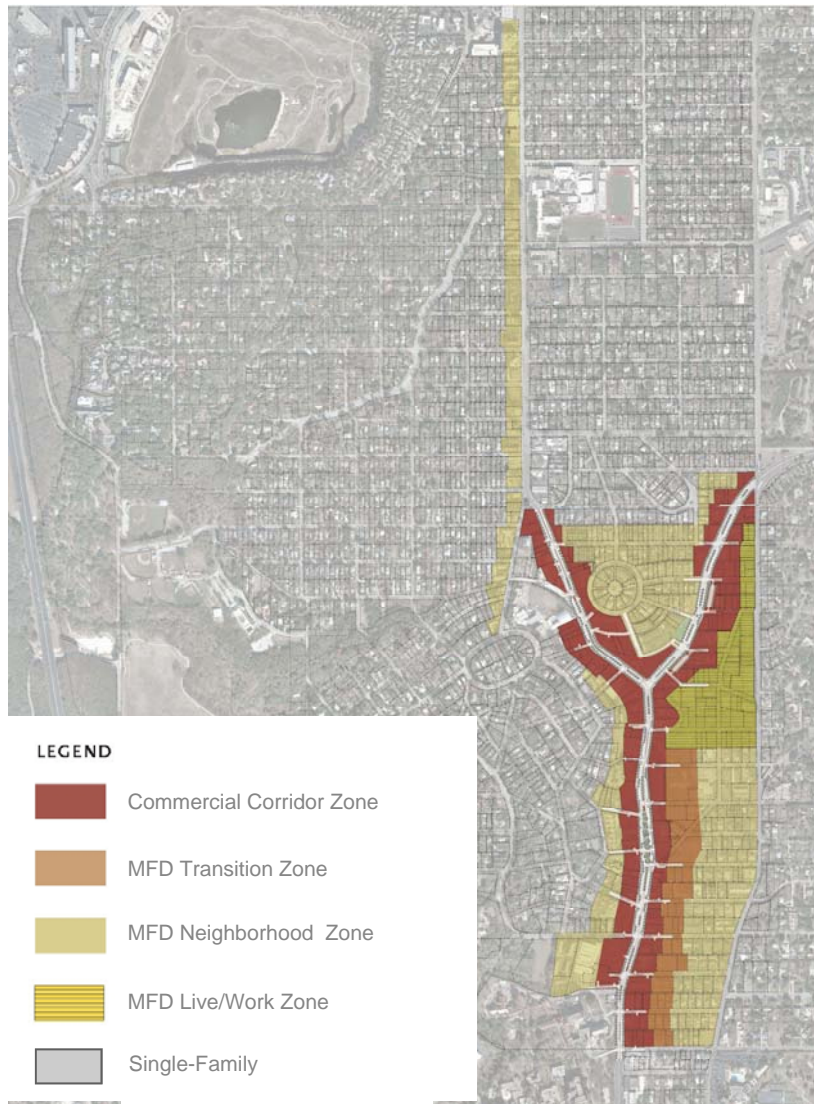
- Modify the residential development standards to reflect the more specific characteristics of each neighborhood.

Existing RDS regulations reflect the intent of the ordinance to mitigate the impact of new construction on adjacent property. The regulations have been in place long enough that their impact can now be seen in recently completed projects. There have been un-

intended consequences that could not have been foreseen, that should now be modified to confirm to the original intent. The regulations should be modified to, more specifically, address backyard privacy and sunlight access issues, to better define side yard articulation, and to encourage one story additions rather two, address fence height and location issues.

Action Step

- Modify Residential Development Standards to better articulate the intent of the original ordinance.



MFD Zones

Existing Character



Multi-family districts in Alamo Heights combine single-family and multi-family dwellings. Duplexes and triplexes generally meld with the character of a neighborhood and can often be mistaken for single family dwellings. Larger apartment buildings of the 1930's and the 1940's with their

front yards, rear parking and scale similar to large houses also tend to blend into the neighborhood. Not until a building boom in the late 1970's and early 1980's were quadplexes, townhouses and row houses introduced to the neighborhood with front yard parking, doorways facing driveways and blank walls facing the street. More recently large condominium projects have tried to maximize the buildable area, which has led to conflicts with neighbors.

Currently only two types of multifamily zoning districts exist in the code, 2FC (duplexes) and MFD (multi-family district). The MFD designation needs to be more specific for different areas within the established neighborhood pattern, requiring the development of new MFD sub-zones within the existing MFD zoning, which would more accurately reflect the existing intensity and scale of development. The least intense zone would be the Neighborhood MFD. Located adjacent to single family away from the main corridors on the west side of Broadway, north of Austin Highway in the Montclair area and deep into the neighborhood on the east side of Broadway. The most intense MFD would be a transition zone located immediately adjacent to the commercial districts on the

east side of Broadway. A third Sub-zone for a live/work area would be established in the triangle between Austin Highway and New Braunfels. This zone would accommodate a mixed-use development so that residents could live and work within one neighborhood, creating an exciting, vibrant urban neighborhood with its own unique identity.

Action Step

- Create new sub-zones within the MFD zoning classification.

Certain types of well designed, multi-family complexes that can blend in and become a vibrant part of a neighborhood should be encouraged. The types need to be described and codified, but they all must have the following characteristics:

- Recognize the importance of nature and landscaping as part of the living experience.
- Respect the residents need for a sense of place and individual identity.
- Be compatible with the scale of the street and the adjacent structures
- Provide light and ventilation
- Provide the opportunity to be outdoors in common spaces that expands the living area of each unit.

Recommended types of multi-family housing include: courtyard, bungalow court, attached bungalow court, rosewalk, lane, quad, triplex and the duplex.

Action Step

- Establish types of multi-family housing that fit into the existing character of Alamo Heights.

Recognizing the characteristics that make Alamo Heights a special place and applying them to multi-family should be the basis of new multi-family design standards. Compatible characteristic include: front doors that face the street or common landscaped areas; front facades that mimic the scale of the adjacent properties; requirement of front porches or stoops; no parking in the front half of lots

unless underground; “hidden” garage doors; driveways that are “entry sidewalks” so that texture and landscaping becomes important; landscaped front yards that do not wall off the neighborhood; and establish height, articulation and looming standards for each type.

Action Steps

- Establish design standards for each type to ensure compatibility with the existing character.
- Establish standards that promote design excellence.

MFD Neighborhood Zone Design Standards

General: This is essentially a multi-family residential zone but with standards intended to ensure that all buildings are compatible with the scale and character of houses. In other words, one could build at a range of densities, as long as it is compatible with the residential character of adjacent houses. Note that this zone fills the entire area east of Broadway, since it is already zoned to allow multi-family intensities. The requirement that new development is designed in harmony with houses is intended to balance the rights of those who want to avail themselves of the greater density allowances, and the rights of those who want to continue to own a house that is not devalued by being stranded amongst large, boxy buildings.

Scale, Massing, Building Types: It is important that standards are included to ensure that buildings are composed of “house-scale” elements and masses, sited on lots, so as to not dominate adjacent houses. Building heights may not exceed 3 stories. In respect for the context of houses, pitched roofs are generally preferable to flat roofs and third floors should often be massed within the roof (which we call 2 ½ story). Building elements close to side or rear lot lines should generally be no more than 2 stories tall. A number of specific building types are identified as recommended prototypes, including:

- Duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes, which are essentially big houses with multiple front doors.
- Bungalow courts, which are essentially small, detached uses fronting a common garden.
- Courtyard housing, which is small attached houses at that front a common courtyard or garden, carefully massed as a compilation of house-scale masses, rather than as larger or more boxy masses.

requirement, otherwise, these features can easily deform the more delicate scale of these buildings. Shared semi-private spaces in the form of courts or gardens meet much of the need for open space, but more private and secure patios or small back yards add value.

Frontage Types: It is extremely important that buildings in this zone take on setbacks and frontage types similar to adjacent and nearby houses and that the units closest to the street have their front doors oriented directly towards the street. Porch and lawn, porch and fence, and stoop frontage types are especially appropriate.

Access: Primary entries must face either the street, or a semi-public/semi-private court or garden. Front doors accessed from vehicular driveways tend to degrade the quality and value of the housing and, therefore, should be discouraged. The notion of “addressing” is key. Having one’s address on a street or a courtyard is clearly an amenity, and having one’s address on a shared driveway is clearly less so.

Parking: Parking should never be in the front yard. Resident parking may consist of open spaces to the rear of the lot or in carports or private garages. The entries to garages, including garage doors, should not be visible (or certainly not prominent) from the street views.

Private outdoor space: This is an important issue in this zone. Ideally, most residential units should have a private patio or balcony. Again, this should not be an absolute or purely numerical

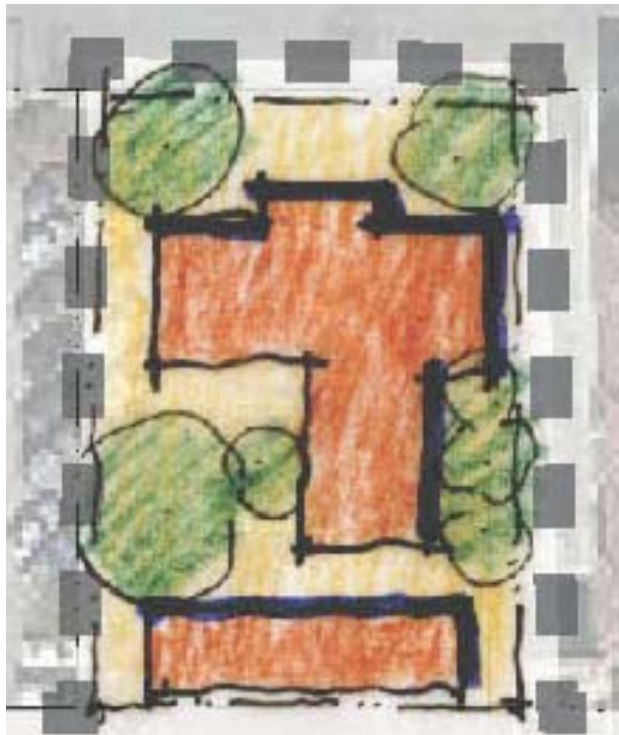
Duplex/Triplex

Description: 2 or 3 attached and/or stacked units

Stories: 2-2.5

Parking: In individual garages to the rear; garage entrance via alleys

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Porches, lawns and stoops front the street



Quadplex

Description: 4 attached, stacked units

Stories: 2-2.5

Parking: In individual garages to the rear

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Front porches address the street and small yards in front (private patios located to the rear)



Private Realm

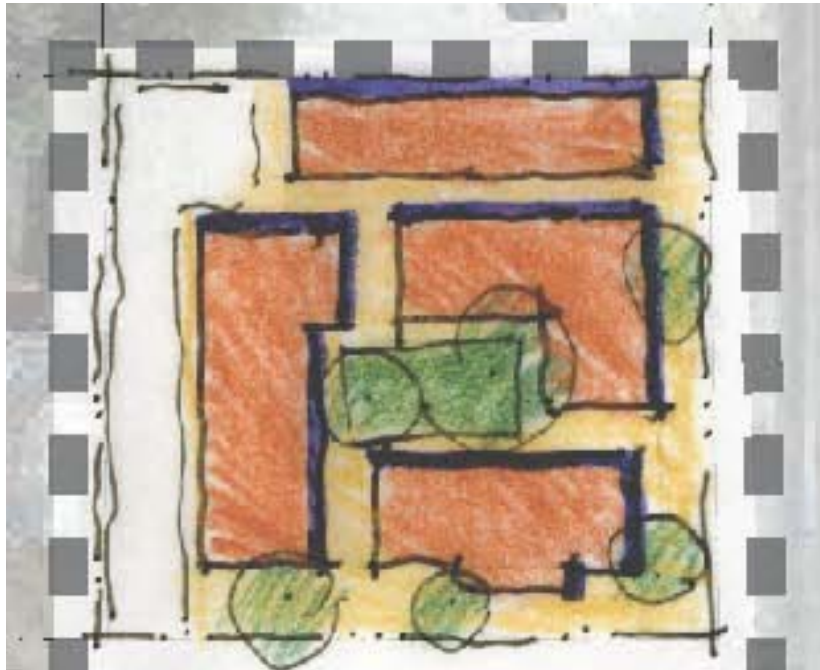
Bungalow Courts

Description: Attached or attached dwelling units located around a central garden

Stories: 2

Parking: In individual detached garages to the rear

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Private patios located around central garden



Private Realm

Courtyard Housing

Description: Detached dwellings around a central linear walk

Stories: 2-2.5

Parking: In individual garages to the rear; garage access around central linear walkway

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Private patios located to the rear; shallow, upper floor balconies facing central linear walk



Private Realm

Lane

Description: Detached cottages or rowhouses located on either side of a heavily-landscaped, winding lane/drive

Stories: 2-2.5

Parking: In individual garages to the side or rear; garages accessed from the lane via individual or shared drives

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Private patios or balconies located around central drive



Private Realm

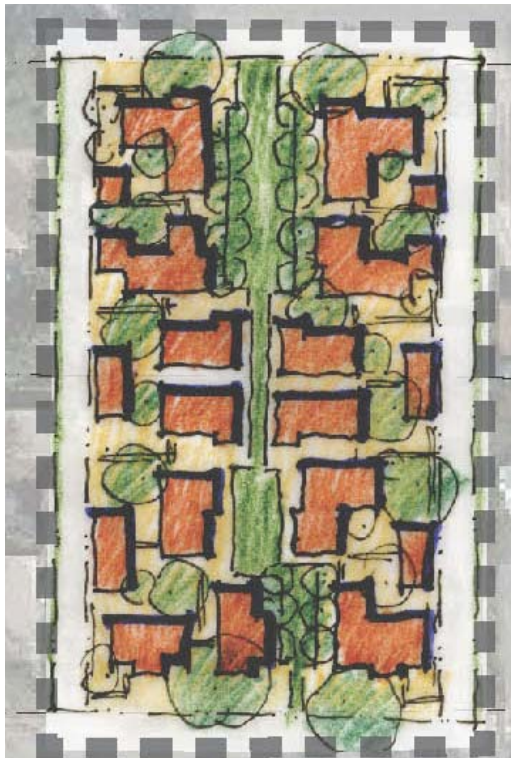
Garden Walk

Description: Detached dwellings around a central linear walk

Stories: 2-2.5

Parking: In individual garages to the rear; garage access around central linear walkway

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Private patios located to the rear



MFD Transition Zone

Existing Character

The multi-family areas adjacent to the commercial corridor are dominated by parking lots. While they do serve a purpose, they are generally underutilized, unlandscaped, and unattractive fields of asphalt. Current zoning promotes these parking lots by allowing parking for adjacent uses in any zoning designation. Some multi-family units abut the commercial zone within the northern part of this area.

Proposed Standards

General: This is a transition zone between the scale and intensity of the Commercial Corridor Zone and the scale and intensity of the MFD Neighborhood Zone. It is intended to allow higher intensities to “soak into” the neighborhood fabric a bit more deeply on the east side of Broadway than would be allowed on the west side.

Scale, Massing, Building Types: All of the same building types and frontage types from the MFD Neighborhood Zone are also allowed in this zone. Additional types are also allowed, such as:

- Rowhouses with either house-form or block-form massing.
- Courtyard housing may have some larger, more boxy masses that relate in scale to the mixed-use buildings in the Commercial Corridor Zone. In some cases, a larger unified development with shared structured parking may include the buildings on Broadway or Austin Highway, and also include courtyard or rowhouse or live-work buildings that have their address on side streets, or on courts that have their addresses on side streets.

Frontage Types: In addition to the MFD Neighborhood Zone, forecourts are appropriate for a short distance back from the Commercial Corridor Zone.

Access: Same as MFD Neighborhood Zone.

Parking: Same as MFD Neighborhood Zone.

Private outdoor space: Same as MFD Neighborhood Zone, with a slightly lower priority on providing such spaces, as described in the Commercial Corridor Zone.

Rowhouses

Description: Attached dwellings multi-level, typically in a boxy form

Stories: 2-2.5

Parking: In individual garages to the rear; garage access via private drive to the rear

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Private yards in front and/or rear



Private Realm

Transition Zone: Larger Courtyard Housing

Description: Detached dwellings around a central linear walk

Stories: 2-3

Parking: In individual garages to the rear or underground garage

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Private patios located to the rear



Live/Work

Existing Character

The northern area between Austin Highway and New Braunfels is an eclectic mix of mature apartments from the 1940's, new condominiums, a few remaining older homes (primarily bungalows), drive-in banks, convenience stores, 1960's suburban style strip developments, and 1980's and 1990's office buildings. The commercial properties facing Austin Highway are composed primarily of huge expanses of pavement for drive-in banking or parking lots. Large commercially-zoned lots occupy entire blocks, which mean that the developments turn their backs (garbage pick up, mechanical systems and electrical utility boxes) to the neighborhood. Small single-story buildings are set significantly away from the street, pedestrian traffic is non-existent and cyclists are rare.

Proposed Standards

General: The development standards are the same as in the MFD Neighborhood Zone (or conceivably could be the same as in the Transition Zone), but office uses are allowed equally with residential uses. The idea here is that if all the buildings have a 2-3 story neighborhood scale, it makes little difference whether they are office or residential in use. This is particularly appropriate because:

- All lots in this area are quite close to Austin Highway and/or New Braunfels.
- The existing building stock is not generally high in quality, and this strategy may increase the pace of rebuilding.

It is entirely possible that a good mix of these two uses - and if a shared/managed parking strategy can be put in place - could result in higher residential densities without the usual amounts of parking, since office parking spaces would be expected to be vacant in the evenings and on weekends when there would be peak parking demand for the residences. Perhaps only one dedicated parking space per dwelling could be required, with the rest being part of a shared pool.

Private Realm

Live/Work

Description: Typically attached dwellings around a central linear walk

Stories: 2-2.5

Parking: Parking in rear lot

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Small balconies or stoops



Private Realm

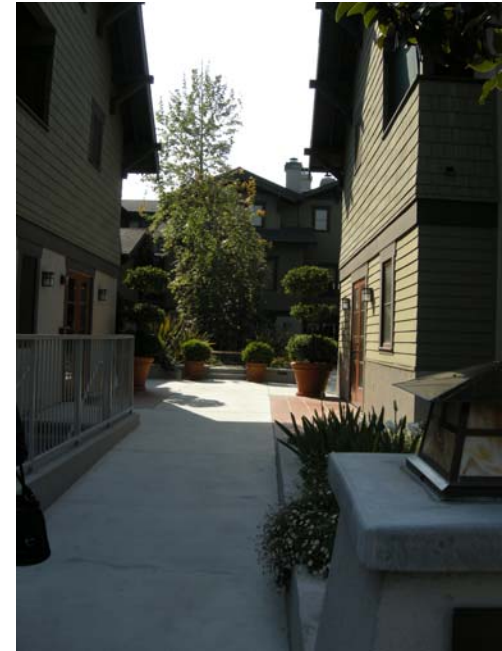
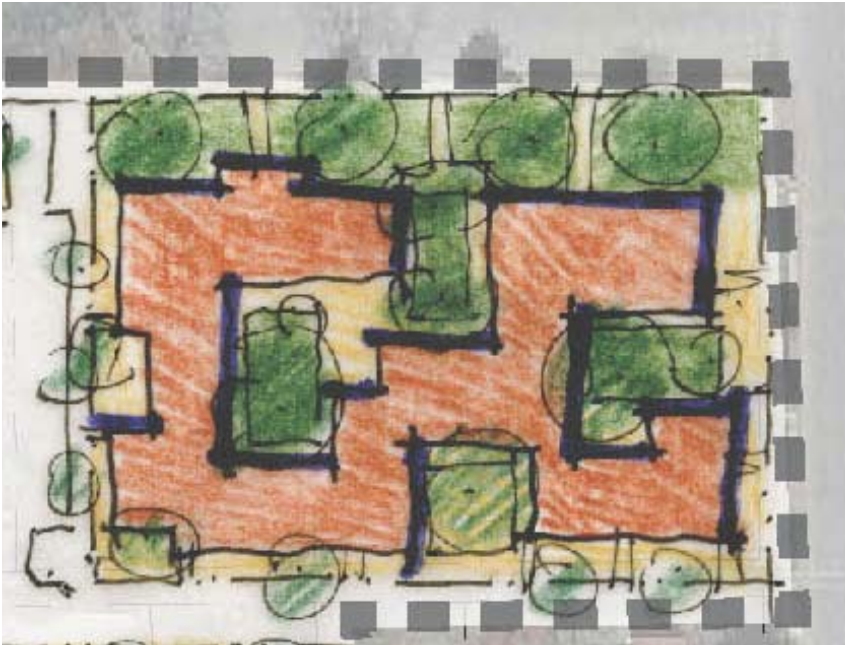
Live/Work: Larger Courtyard

Description: Typically attached dwellings around a central linear walk with offices permitted

Stories: 2-3

Parking: Parking underground

Frontage/Porches/Yards: Shared quasi-public space



Commercial Corridor Zone

Existing Character

Commercial properties within Alamo Heights now generally follow a suburban pattern. Originally this was not the case. Early commercial buildings were built as zero lot line buildings immediately adjacent to the street. Remnants of this development pattern remain in the commercial blocks north of Mary D and south of Grove. The blocks with some of the most well-known businesses, such as The Broadway 50/50 and Central Boot, the old Broadway Theater Building, Cappycinos and the Twig Book Shop reflect this earlier development pattern. Historic photos illustrate how Broadway looked when MacDougal Cleaners, Luby's and HEB were all adjacent to the street. Construction after the War began using a development pattern, which supported the dominance of the car in everyday life. Modeling the new suburban patterns, subsequent buildings were set back from the street with parking lots in front, creating small islands of development. Pedestrian connections became less and less important until they have almost completely disappeared. Today it is rare to see pedestrians strolling along the business district of Alamo Heights.

During neighborhood meetings there was an overwhelming belief expressed by participants that pedestrians should once again be given priority. The resulting development patterns should enliven the space including sidewalk cafes and interesting shops. Buildings should be designed to provide a central gathering space for neighbors to meet and greet, to create a sense of place and to act as a destination that encourages social interaction.

Insert historic photo

Design Standards for Commercial Corridor Zone

To accomplish this, careful consideration should be given to the design of new projects within the commercial areas and how they relate to their physical context. Standards should be developed

regarding how new projects relate to the street, to adjacent buildings and to buildings across the street, as well as the historical, cultural and climatic influences that are part of the unique character of Alamo Heights.

Action Step

- Establish standards for types of buildings that enliven the commercial areas and fit into the existing character of Alamo Heights.

Alamo Heights should promote architectural and design excellence in buildings, landscape, open space and the public realm. Standards should be developed that promote excellence at all levels, including street character, block character and building character.

Street character design standards and regulations would address how a building engages with the street and the public realm. It will cover such topics as site design and frontages, what to do at historically significant sites, how the building should engage the street including entrances, windows and uses and front yard landscapes. Design standards should also provide guidance regarding block character. Topics that would be addressed concerning character of a given block include: how to fit in and not stand out; how to relate to neighbors through massing and scale; pedestrian access to buildings; vehicular access to buildings and creating interesting walls along the street. Design standards for building character would address specific scale and massing of the individual building, style, materials and detailing, openings, open space, hardscape, landscape, as well as building service, trash receptacle and utility placement.

Action Step

- Establish design standards for commercial developments to ensure compatibility with the existing character.

Sign Ordinance

The current sign ordinance gives significant discretionary authority to the Architectural Review Board (ARB) to determine whether a sign is appropriate or not. With little specificity, it is the responsibility of the ARB to provide guidance to applicants. Codifying the existing practices would provide direction for the applicants prior to submission, resolve any potential ambiguity in their interpretation, provide strict enforceable standards for everyone, and give property owners a reliable set of standards to use with their tenants. Having property owners develop a master signage plan for their buildings that is approved by the ARB would also expedite the approval process. Specifying the size and types of signs allowed in various circumstances, such as multi-tenant signs, signs located on side streets, and directional signage, would also make it easier for applicants to submit a successful application. Signs intended for pedestrians and signs intended for vehicles should also be differentiated. Lighting and materials should be carefully studied and choices limited to provide a consistent look and feel for the area.

Action Step

- Re-write the sign ordinance.

Proposed Standards

General: This is the “Main Street” zone, with 2 to 4 story buildings that may be fairly boxy in form, are generally built to the right-of-way line, and generally have shopfronts at the ground floor.

Scale, Massing, Building Types: It is important that standards be included to ensure that the scale of the boxy masses is controlled to promote a “town scale”. That is to say, individual buildings (or individual massing elements within larger buildings that are composed of multiple masses) should not be more than about 100 feet wide or 60 feet deep. Height variation within a block (either variation in number of stories or variation in the heights of certain stories) is also important to retaining a town scale.

Frontage Types: Galleries (covered sidewalks with columns in the right of way a few feet behind the curb), or awnings or suspended canopies may provide shade and weather protection over sidewalks.

Access: Primary entries to offices or residences on upper floors should be oriented to the street, not just off the parking at the rear.

Parking: Parking located in lots or structures should be located behind or below the building, or on the street in front. Where front parking lots are provided on the site, they should be scaled and detail.

Private outdoor space: While the provision of private outdoor space would not be required for commercial ground floors, small gardens or courts off the rear of commercial suites would be encouraged. Balconies or patios for residences behind the front commercial suites or on upper floors are also nice, but the provision of them should not interfere with the simplicity of the main facades. Do NOT require a fixed amount of such space, otherwise big projecting balconies or big deep recesses that tear up the facades with blank simple walls defining the street space may result. Sidewalk cafes should be encouraged. Drive-throughs should be prohibited.

Private Realm

Commercial Block

Description: “Main Street” zone generally built to the right-of-way with shop fronts at ground floor with offices and residential above; generally boxy buildings

Stories: 2-4

Parking: To the rear, underground, in shared parking facilities or in park-once facilities

Patios/Balconies: Not prevalent

