

# **GOVERNMENT HILL**

## **Neighborhood Plan**



*Prepared by the citizens of the*  
**Government Hill Neighborhood**  
*in partnership with the*  
**City of San Antonio Planning Department**

***September, 2001***

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*City Council approval of this document does not include any financial commitment to the initiatives set forth within the document.*

The City of San Antonio Planning Department and The San Antonio Development Agency (SADA), together with the Government Hill community developed the Government Hill Neighborhood Plan. The Government Hill Neighborhood is bounded by Fort Sam Houston to the north, Fort Sam Houston along Hines Avenue to the east, the Union Pacific railroad yard to the south and Broadway to the west.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Government Hill Neighborhood Plan is to create a specific plan that will help revitalize the neighborhood. The Government Hill community has identified goals addressing housing, preferred land uses, community initiatives, community facilities/recreation, and transportation/infrastructure. Some of the strategies identified to accomplish these goals are mapped on the Preferred Land Use - Redevelopment Strategies Map included as part of the plan. The elements of this plan will be used as a guide by the neighborhood to revitalize the area through partnerships and common goals.

## **Strategies**

These strategies were identified by the community as key to the implementation of the plan and revitalization of the Government Hill area. Each strategy is taken from an objective within the plan elements.

- Work with the various housing agencies to develop a systematic plan to repair and rehabilitate housing.
- Increase the participation of the neighbors to get involved with strategies to improve the neighborhood.
- Work with TxDOT to landscape along both sides of I.H. 35, utilizing existing irrigation system, and create a noise and pollution buffer.
- Encourage a monthly inspection and clean up of vacant lots in the neighborhood.

## **Consistency with Other Plans**

This plan is supported by the following **Master Plan (1997)** Goal:

***Neighborhoods, Goal 2: Strengthen the use of the Neighborhood Planning Process and Neighborhood Plans.***

## **Community Based Process**

Three public meetings were held to gain input from residents, property owners, and businesses in the Government Hill Neighborhood. A transcription of community meetings delineating strengths/opportunities, weaknesses/ threats, key ideas/solutions, and small inexpensive ideas, can be found in Appendix A. Throughout the process, community involvement and partnerships were stressed as critical to the success of this plan.

## **Recognition by the City of San Antonio**

After a process of City Departmental review for policy consistency, the Government Hill Neighborhood plan was reviewed by the Planning Commission to ensure inclusiveness, policy consistency and that the Plan is an accurate reflection of the community's values. Upon the recommendation of the Planning Commission, and its adoption by City Council, the Plan becomes a component of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan.

## **Plan Contents**

The Goals, Objectives and Strategies, and Redevelopment Strategy Map address the Government Hill community's issues. The Plan elements provide information regarding each of the goals and an explanation of the redevelopment strategies.

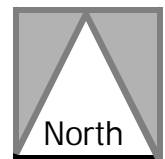
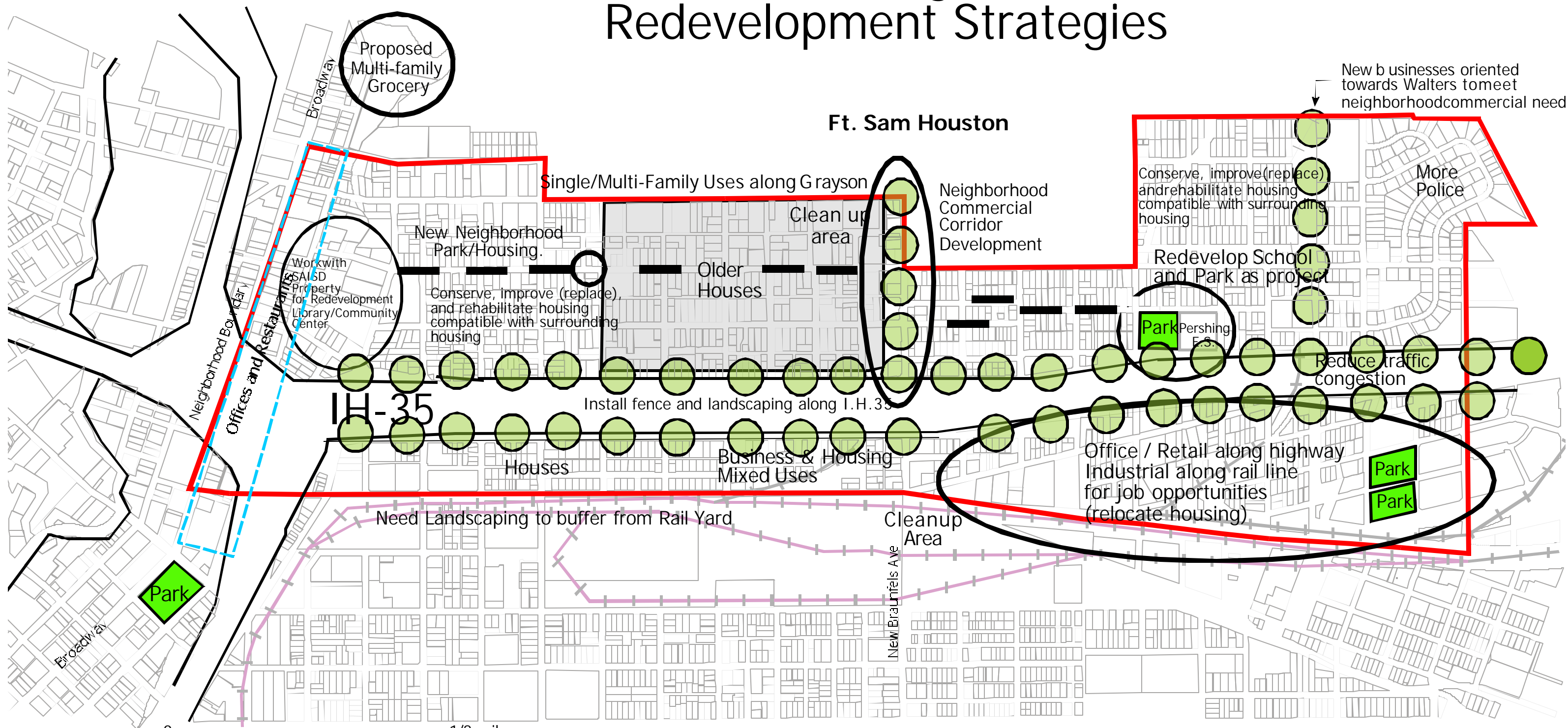
The appendices include A) Transcription of Meetings, B) Ft. Sam Houston Gateway Commercial District Urban Renewal Plan, C) Zoning Densities and Allowable Uses, D) City Initiatives, E) Demographics and Health Statistics, and F) Community Input.

Community Goals, Objectives, and Strategies were identified at the April 29, 1998 and June 2, 1998 public meetings. Detailed explanations of the strategies may be found on pages 5-7. A summary of the principal goals expressed by the community include:

- 1. Housing**
  - 1.1 Conserve, rehabilitate and/or replace (if necessary) housing stock.
- 2. Land Use/Revitalization**
  - 2.1 Redevelop and revitalize the neighborhood.
- 3. Community Initiatives**
  - 3.1 Increase community involvement and influence.
  - 3.2 Increase the safety and security of the neighborhood.
- 4. Community Facilities/Recreation**
  - 4.1 Improve neighborhood open spaces and community facilities and make the neighborhood pedestrian friendly.
- 5. Transportation/Infrastructure**
  - 5.1 Improve the streetscape and make the neighborhood a pedestrian friendly environment.

The following map identifies the Government Hill Redevelopment Strategies.

# Government Hill Neighborhood Plan Redevelopment Strategies



Prepared by the City of San Antonio, Planning Department

**Legend:**

Repair Streets	
Landscape	

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the Goals, Objectives and Strategies developed by community participants during the April 29, 1998 and June 2, 1998 community meetings. Appendix A contains a transcription of the information used to formulate these goals.

### HOUSING

#### **Goal: Conserve, rehabilitate and/or replace (if necessary) housing stock.**

**Objective:** To develop a housing preservation strategy to stabilize and improve the real estate values.

**Strategies:**

- Pursue the proposed historic district within the neighborhood (see Map 1) only if agreed upon by the community with ample information and significance and only when all identified criteria in the Historic Revitalization Three Point Program are met (see pg. 8 for criteria).
- Work with the various housing agencies to develop a systematic plan to repair and rehabilitate housing.
- Identify programs that focus on housing repair/rehabilitation or replacement for the elderly.
- Form an oversight committee to monitor and inform landlords/tenants of code violations. In addition this committee will work with residents and area churches to help provide services for elderly and needy.\*
- Maintain Select Housing Target Area in coordination with San Antonio Development Agency.\*

### LAND USE / REVITALIZATION

#### **Goal: Redevelop and revitalize the neighborhood.**

**Objective:** To encourage and support any revitalization and redevelopment efforts consistent with this plan.

**Strategies:**

- Encourage a monthly inspection and clean up of vacant lots in the neighborhood.

*Staff Comment: This is only feasible if initiated by the neighborhood and reported to code compliance.*

- Market the vacant parcels of land to prospective homeowners and businesses.\*
- Recruit desired businesses and the expansion of existing businesses in the neighborhood.\*
- Encourage the involvement of all organizations in the area to work together to improve the neighborhood.\*
- Rezone existing 1938 zoning to 1965 zoning to restrict incompatible land uses.
- Increase the penalties for any code violators.

\* indicates issues outside of the City's jurisdiction



*Staff Comment: The fine for code violations is assessed by a Municipal Court Judge. If violations are corrected before the case is scheduled to be heard, then the fine is dismissed.*

**Objective:** To seek financial incentives to improve housing and entice new residents to the area.

**Strategies**

- Work with local agencies and lending institutions to provide information on grants or low interest loans for home or business repairs as well as first time home buyers.\*

## COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

### **Goal: Increase community involvement and influence.**

**Objective:** To encourage 100% eligible voters to register and vote.

**Strategies:**

- Designate a block captain to be responsible for registering all eligible voters to register. \*
- Increase the participation of the neighbors to get involved with strategies to improve the neighborhood.\*
- Coordinate with a central location (a local grocery store) and volunteers from the neighborhood to sponsor an information booth.\*

**Objective:** To work with the various agencies responsible for completing the U.S. Census.

**Strategies:**

- Designate a block captain to be responsible for distributing information on the importance on the Census and contacting all the residents by phone as a reminder to submit all U.S. Census data.\*
- Coordinate with a central location (a local grocery store) and volunteers from the neighborhood to work an information booth.\*

### **Goal: Increase the safety/security of the neighborhood.**

**Objective:** To establish a working relationship with each other and public agencies, and the Police Department.

**Strategies:**

- Work with Police Department to support the opening of a storefront sub-station and bike patrol with a SAFFE officer.

*Staff Comment: The neighborhood SAFFE officer has proven a more effective means of fighting neighborhood crime, as storefront services produce minimal impacts.*

- Install speed control devices on identified problem streets throughout the neighborhood.
- Work with TxDOT to install safety barriers between neighborhood and I.H. 35 right of way.\*
- Install stop signs on frontage roads at off ramps from I.H. 35.

*Staff Comment: TxDOT does not install stop signs on frontage roads, because they impede traffic flow.*

\* indicates issues outside of the City's jurisdiction

- Work with police to establish a zero tolerance of crime in the neighborhood.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES / RECREATION

**Goal: Improve neighborhood open spaces and community facilities and make the neighborhood pedestrian friendly.**

**Objective:** Provide a neighborhood park for recreation and open space within the neighborhood.

***Strategies:***

- Work with the City and School District to identify potential properties for a neighborhood park.
- Connect parks with sidewalks and tree lined streets
- Connect neighborhoods on the north and south sides of I.H. 35 with a pedestrian bridge at Walters St., utilizing abandoned railroad bridge.

*Staff Comment: Pedestrian safety would be better addressed utilizing a redeveloped Walters St. bridge.*

- Work with SAISD or other agencies to establish library, parks, and community facilities (see page 18 for specific locations).

## TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

**Goal: Improve streetscape, roadways and make the neighborhood a pedestrian friendly environment.**

**Objective:** To improve and maintain the existing infrastructure, throughout the neighborhood, in good repair and improve the visual appearance of the streetscape.

***Strategies***

- Improve streets, sidewalks and drainage on N. New Braunfels, Walters Ave., Sandmeyer Street, Mason Street, Carson Street and throughout the neighborhood.
- Install new lighting around bus stops, neighborhood amenities and in needed areas.
- Improve sewage system for entire neighborhood.
- Work with SAISD on issues of shared parking.
- Work with TxDOT to landscape along both sides of I.H. 35, utilizing existing irrigation system, and create a noise and pollution buffer.\*
- Beautify Walters St.

\* indicates issues outside of the City's jurisdiction

The following information provides background research and detailed information on the various strategies that may be implemented to address the goals of the specific Plan elements.

## HOUSING

Housing is an issue in the neighborhood. There are houses within the Government Hill neighborhood that have been identified as historically significant. Therefore, the idea of conserving what is already there is important to the community. However, the ability to build new and more modern structures to replace those houses that are beyond affordable rehabilitation is also an important driving force.

The designation of a section of the neighborhood as a historic district has received support within the neighborhood. The following criteria of the Historic Revitalization Program must be satisfied before the proposed historic district can be implemented.

**Criteria 1** - The creation of design guidelines that are unique to Government Hill, and include a list of lower cost alternative materials to reduce rehabilitation cost.

**Criteria 2** - The implementation of a Residents Assistance Program that will ensure low income persons are not negatively impacted from the implementation of a historic district. This program will outline and initiate an education and follow-up process that identifies opportunities to assist neighborhood residents with the rehabilitation and maintenance of structures. An additional element of the program will address the displacement of families that can no longer afford to live within the district and the adjacent areas affected by the district. This element will include programs to help displaced families become homeowners through a Down Payment Assistance Program. Another part of this element is a Rental Relocation Program to help families that do not qualify for homeownership. The Rental Relocation Program will offer up to three months rent to help families relocate (the first priority is to relocate within the neighborhood).

**Criteria 3** - The identification and commitment of funding sources for the aforementioned criteria that will not affect current funds dedicated to other initiatives within the plan area.

Listed below are additional options identified by the Planning Department to address the housing conservation issue.

### Possible Options:

#### Maintain existing neighborhood:

- No means of conserving housing stock -- No building guidelines.

**Implement Conservation District:**

- Conserves housing through set of demolition guidelines.
- Allows new construction and rehabilitation guidelines.

**Utilize Master Plan:**

- Section III (F) - Urban Design

Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the City's urban design

*Policy 1b:* Develop urban design policies and standards which integrate and coordinate planning for historic and cultural resources, public facilities and services, private development, infrastructure, transportation, arts and cultural resources, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human service facilities.

(6) Develop unique and specific design standards for areas throughout the City, including neighborhoods and the downtown.

**Strategies**

Listed below are the strategies identified by the community to satisfy the housing goal.

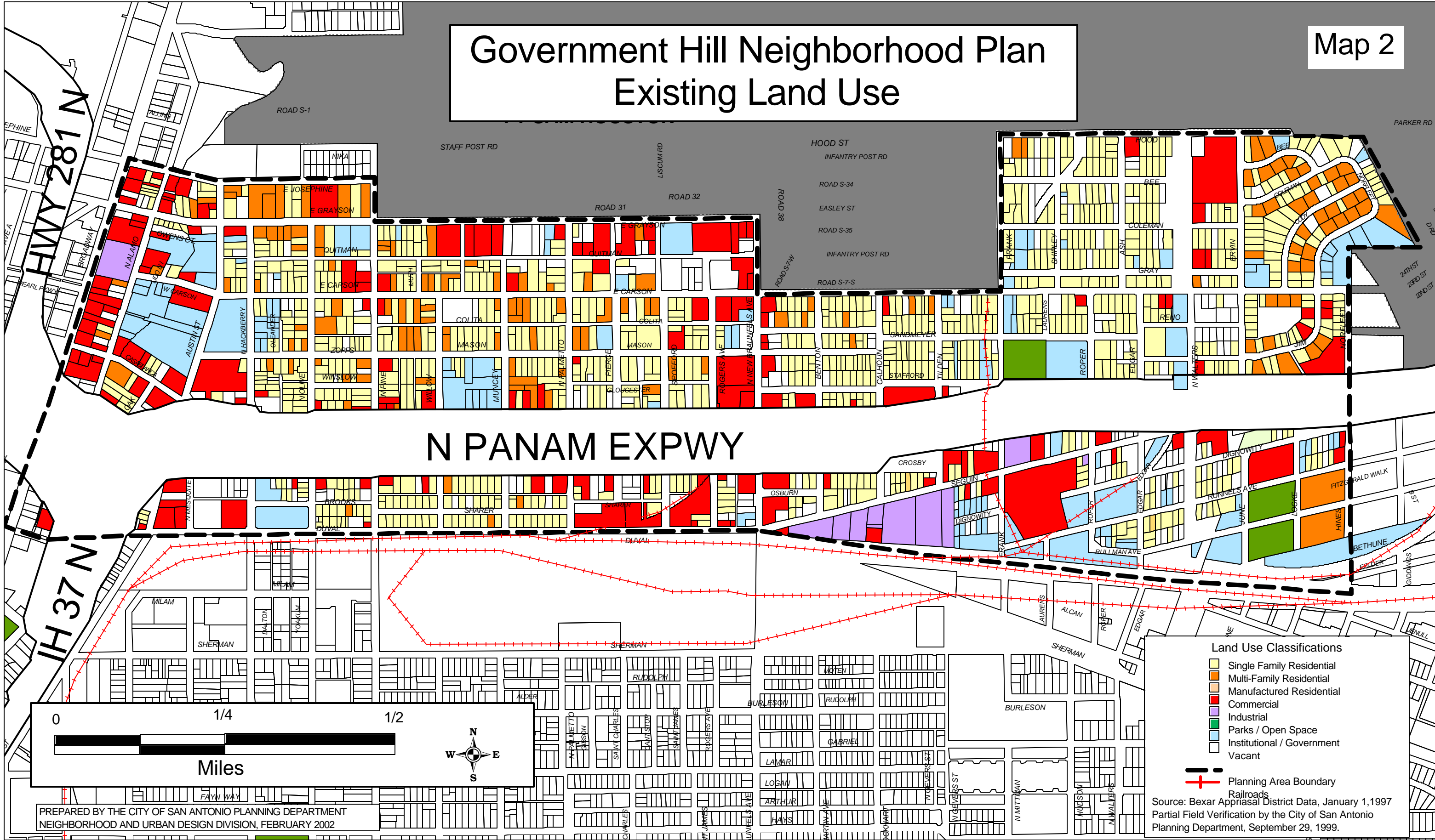
- Pursue historic designation of the neighborhood, only if agreed upon by community, with ample information about the significance of this option.
- Clean up abandoned houses.
- Systematic plan to repair and rehabilitate housing.
- Funding to help elderly/seniors rehabilitate their homes.
- Pursue additional funding options for the rehabilitation of older homes.

## LAND USE AND ZONING

### **Existing Land Use**

The current land use pattern for this area is residential. There are pockets and concentrations of commercial and mixed-uses throughout the neighborhood. The major commercial corridors are along N. New Braunfels, Broadway and the I.H. 35 access roads. The majority of the industrial uses are along Seguin St. in the southeastern section of the neighborhood. As well as having the industrial uses located in the southeastern section, this area is also the area with the highest concentration of vacant parcels. See Map 2 for more details.

# Government Hill Neighborhood Plan Existing Land Use

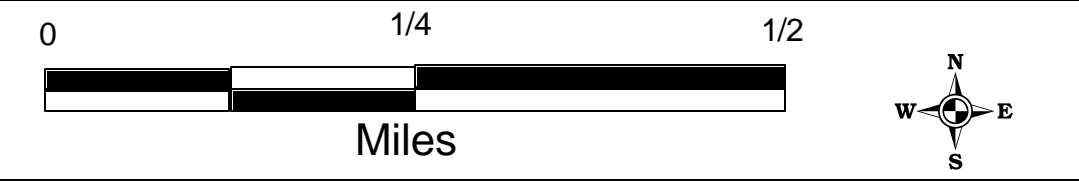


### Land Use Classifications

- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Manufactured Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Parks / Open Space
- Institutional / Government
- Vacant

Planning Area Boundary  
 Railroads

Source: Bexar Appraisal District Data, January 1, 1997  
 Partial Field Verification by the City of San Antonio  
 Planning Department, September 29, 1999.



PREPARED BY THE CITY OF SAN ANTONIO PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
 NEIGHBORHOOD AND URBAN DESIGN DIVISION, FEBRUARY 2002

## LAND USE AND ZONING

### **Current Zoning**

The majority of the area north of I.H. 35 is zoned multi-family based on 1938 zoning. The 1938 zoning is based on letters from “A” to “M,” with “A” being single family residential district and “M” being a second manufacturing district. The 1938 zoning codes allow for any use allowed in one zone is allowed in a consecutive zone, for example, anything that is allowed in zone “A,” is allowed in zone “D.”

Based on current zoning criteria, the majority of the area is under utilized for its zoning classification. For instance, there is a high concentration of single family structures in the central section of the neighborhood between N. New Braunfels and Austin. This section is zoned “D” for apartment district. There are some commercial as well as light industrial zones on the western edge of the neighborhood along Broadway and Alamo, which are not being fully utilized as well. There are other sections of the neighborhood that are suitable for their current zoning. An example of this is in the northeastern part of the neighborhood between Frank St. and Edgar/Ash St. that has a “new” zoning classification of R-1 (1965 zoning), which allows single family dwelling units.

The southern section of the neighborhood is a mix of 1938 and 1965 zoning. The majority of the land in this section is zoned for industrial type uses based on 1938 zoning. However, there are some zoned R-5 (1965 zoning), small lot single family, between Palmetto Ave. and Olive St. For further information, see Map 3.

**Appendix C contains a table of zoning densities and allowable uses.**





**LAND USE AND ZONING**

The proposed land use is divided into eight categories based on the issues, goals and stereotypes identified in the plan. The land-use classifications included on the Land Use Plan Map (Map 4) are listed in the table below.

<b>LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Low-Density Residential</b>	Primarily single-family dwellings on individual lots. Development densities in these areas will not exceed 7 dwelling units per gross acre.
<b>Medium-Density Residential</b>	Variety of detached or attached dwellings, including single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, or apartments. Development densities range from 7-15 dwelling units per gross acre.
<b>High-Density Residential</b>	All types of land-intensive housing. Development densities exceed 15 units per gross acre.
<b>Office</b>	Professional, personal and business services.
<b>Mixed Use Commercial</b>	Residential and Local/Convenience Commercial uses.
<b>Local/Convenience Commercial</b>	Moderate-intensity convenience retail or service uses, generally serving small, local neighborhoods.
<b>Light Industrial</b>	General manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing, and research and development uses.
<b>Institutional</b>	Public, quasi-public, and institutional uses.
<b>Recreation/Open Space</b>	Lands for either active or passive enjoyment, and environmental protection uses.

**Low-density residential** areas include the area north of I.H. 35, that is west of Walters and east of N. New Braunfels, with Fort Sam Houston as the northern boundary, and the area south I.H. 35, between Pine and Rogers, with the southern boundaries being the Union Pacific railroad yard (*between Pine and Palmetto*), and Sharer (*between Palmetto and Rogers*).

**Medium-density residential** areas lie between Fort Sam Houston to the east, along Northfleet, and Walters to the west, with Fort Sam Houston and I.H. 35 being the northern and southern boundaries respectively. Other medium-density residential areas include the area between Rogers and Hackberry, with Grayson (*between Pine and Spofford*) and Quitman (*between Spofford and Rogers*) being the northern boundaries and I.H. 35 being the southern boundary.

**The high-density residential** areas include the southeastern and northwestern corners of the neighborhood. The southeastern area is bounded by Hines to the east, June to the west, I.H. 35 to the north, and the Union Pacific railroad to the south. The northwestern area is in the shape of an “L,” bounded by Austin St. to the west, Hackberry on the east (*between Quitman and Carson*), and Pine (*between Josephine*

and Quitman), Josephine to the north, and on the south, Carson (between Austin and Hackberry), and Quitman (between Hackberry and Pine).

**Office Use** can be found in only one area in the neighborhood. It is located in the southern part of the neighborhood between Olive and Pine, south of I.H. 35.

**Mixed Use Commercial** areas are located along Grayson between Pine and Palmetto and along the I.H. 35 access road between Willow and Hackberry.

**Local/Convenience Commercial** areas are located throughout the area. There are areas between Broadway and Austin St., as well as along N. New Braunfels, I.H. 35, and Walters. There is a large area to the south of I.H. 35 between June and Roper and extending along the I.H. 35 frontage road. In addition to those areas already described, there is another area in the southwest corner between Olive and Austin.

*Staff Comment: The large area to the south of I.H. 35 between June and Roper and extending along the frontage road currently contains some residential uses. These residential uses, once rezoned commercial, will qualify for nonconforming rights that allow maintenance but no additions to the existing residential structures. Since the future of this area is commercial, the City policy is to no longer financially support housing programs in this area, but to encourage the transition of existing residential uses to the more cohesive part of the neighborhood, north of I.H. 35.*

**Light Industrial** uses have been identified as suitable for one area in the southern section of the neighborhood, between N. New Braunfels and Roper, with Seguin Ave. and the Union Pacific railroad yard being the northern and southern boundaries respectively.

**Institutional** uses vary in size and are located throughout the neighborhood.

**Recreational/Open Space** uses are located in two areas. The first area is in the northern part of the neighborhood to the west of Pershing Elementary School. The other location is in the southern area of the neighborhood, between Lock and June, and bounded by Runnels and Bethune to the north and south respectively.

Map 4 provides a snapshot of the proposed land uses.

## REZONING

Some of the existing commercial uses have been identified as “not appropriate” for the surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, there has been a community request to investigate the current uses allowed under the 1938 zoning. More restrictive zoning classifications are desired in many of the areas currently zoned under the 1938 code.



## REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES

The revitalization of the neighborhood plays a key role in the identity and image of the neighborhood. Some of the strategies for revitalizing the neighborhood include cleaning up trash in areas around the entrances to Fort Sam Houston, as well as the Union Pacific railroad yard. The encouragement of new businesses into the neighborhood is also an important revitalization strategy for the neighborhood. The previous strategies as well as others are listed on the Redevelopment Strategies Map (Map 1, pg. 4).

Listed below are revitalization strategies for the neighborhood:

- Work with code compliance.
- Landscape along business corridors (Walters and N. New Braunfels).
- Institute regular trash pick up from vacant lots - possibly monthly.
- Clean up abandoned homes/properties.
- Develop/encourage new businesses along Walters St. and New Braunfels Ave.
- Develop a neighborhood commercial corridor along New Braunfels Ave.
- Rezone neighborhood to current zoning code to identify a scope of more compatible uses.

## COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The Government Hill Neighborhood has many community-minded residents who are interested in working to better their neighborhood. The Government Hill Neighborhood is a neighborhood with issues common to many older neighborhoods. During the community meetings, many ideas were envisioned that will effect the implementation of their issues. Listed below are the prioritized strategies:

### Community Involvement

Enhance the neighborhood reputation by:

- Organizing a community fundraiser.
- Educating citizens about participating in the 2000 census and voting.
- Convening all the organizations in the area to work together.
- Fostering community and business partnerships.

### Safety and Security

- Initiate a police bike patrol in the neighborhood.
- Establish a police substation at a church or storefront.
- Develop a working relationship with police.
- Implement speed control devices throughout neighborhood, specifically along Walters and New Braunfels.
- Initiate a neighborhood watch and/or Cellular on Patrol (COP).

*Staff Comments: The Implementation of speed control devices along Walters and New Braunfels is not feasible since both of these streets are identified as thoroughfares in the City's Major Thoroughfare Plan.*

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES/RECREATION

The community has identified the need for community recreation and green space as well as a community center. The area next to Pershing Elementary School has been identified as a preferable location for a community park. An additional suitable location identified for a community park lies on the east side of Willow between Carson and Colita. Other facilities have been identified on a much broader level, such as a park for the southern section of the neighborhood. An additional strategy identified to address the green space issue is to create pedestrian paths connecting the neighborhood from east to west and north to south. Listed below are the Community Facilities/Recreation prioritized strategies:

- Develop a park next to Pershing Elementary.
- Develop a crosswalk over I.H. 35, utilizing abandoned railroad bridge at Walters and I.H. 35.
- Develop a park in the Pine and Carson/Willow and Carson area.
- Create sidewalks throughout neighborhood for walking and jogging.
- Create a park in southern sector of neighborhood.
- Develop a park in the neighborhood to encourage recreation activities.

*Staff Comments: The Walters St. railroad bridge is not a safe alternative for pedestrian traffic to cross I.H. 35 since there is a heavily traveled frontage road on both ends of the bridge. Pedestrians would still have to contend with traffic at a location that is not feasible for a pedestrian crossing. Pershing Park already exists next to the elementary school. This park is slated for redesign and construction in 2003 as part of the 1998 San Antonio Parks and Recreation System Plan.*

## TRANSPORTATION / INFRASTRUCTURE

The community's infrastructure is an area of concern. During the community meeting process, many issues, from streets and sidewalks to sewage and drainage, were identified, and in some instances, noted as very specific areas of concern. However, some issues, such as sewage, were identified as community-wide concerns. Listed below are the Transportation/Infrastructure prioritized strategies:

- Streets, sidewalks and drainage should be improved throughout the neighborhood.
- Prevent sewage from backing up into homes.
- Slow traffic along Walters, especially at bridge over Union Pacific, possibly with stop signs or speed bumps.
- Repave Seguin Ave.
- Repair Sandmeyer St. and Mason St. east of N. New Braunfels (damage is result of water line replacement).
- Repair or repave Carson St.
- Improve "alley" streets with curbs and lighting.
- Improve lighting and benches at bus stops throughout neighborhood.

*Staff Comments: The installation of speed bumps on Walters would impede traffic flow along this road and therefore would be in opposition to the City's Major Thoroughfare Plan.*

## **Major Thoroughfare Plan**

The San Antonio Major Thoroughfare Plan, shown in map 5, illustrates major roadways for the flow of traffic throughout the San Antonio area. Government Hill is serviced by three of these roadways. The first and largest roadway classification is an Expressway and has a public Right of Way (ROW) width of 300 feet or more; I.H. 35 is defined as such. The next roadway classification is the Primary Arterial Type B, which requires a ROW width of 60 – 110 feet. Both Broadway and New Braunfels Avenue are in this category. Walters and Pine/Hackberry are identified as Secondary Arterial Type B roadways, which requires a ROW width between 60 and 86 feet. There is one Arterial Type C roadway, Alamo St., with a ROW width between 40 and 60 feet, which provides service to the Government Hill area.



**History and Study**

The question of the suitability of an overlay historic district zoning designation within the Government Hill neighborhood was considered at some length during the development of the plan.

Staff met with the Government Hill Alliance Neighborhood Association to discuss historic district designation. As part of the designation process, the neighborhood association collected petitions in favor of the designation from property owners who represent 52 percent of the area proposed for designation. Concurrently, the department contracted with a historic preservation consultant from Austin, Ralph Newlan, to prepare a *Historic Resources Survey* of the Government Hill Neighborhood. Completed in August of 1995, the inventory of 1,130 buildings prioritizes the architectural integrity and historic contribution of every structure into a high, medium, or low category. A total of 27 percent of the total number of properties were identified as high priority sites. This number is larger than is commonly found in most districts indicating a high degree of historic integrity.