

# HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

July 20, 2016

Agenda Item No: 1

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2016-285  
**ADDRESS:** 235 W HOUSTON ST  
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB: 119 BLK: - LOT: 19 (FROST MOTOR BANK SUBD)  
**ZONING:** D HS  
**CITY COUNCIL DIST.:** 1  
**LANDMARK:** Alamo / Peck / Purse Building  
**APPLICANT:** Irby Hightower/Alamo Architects  
**OWNER:** Frost Bank  
**TYPE OF WORK:** New construction of a commercial tower  
**REQUEST:**

The applicant is requesting conceptual approval to construct an office tower on the lot at 235 W Houston Street.

## APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

*Historic Design Guidelines, Chapter 4, Guidelines for New Construction*

### 1. Building and Entrance Orientation

#### A. FAÇADE ORIENTATION

- i. Setbacks*—Align front facades of new buildings with front facades of adjacent buildings where a consistent setback has been established along the street frontage. Use the median setback of buildings along the street frontage where a variety of setbacks exist. Refer to UDC Article 3, Division 2. Base Zoning Districts for applicable setback requirements.
- ii. Orientation*—Orient the front façade of new buildings to be consistent with the predominant orientation of historic buildings along the street frontage.

#### B. ENTRANCES

- i. Orientation*—Orient primary building entrances, porches, and landings to be consistent with those historically found along the street frontage. Typically, historic building entrances are oriented towards the primary street.

### 2. Building Massing and Form

#### A. SCALE AND MASS

- i. Similar height and scale*—Design new construction so that its height and overall scale are consistent with nearby historic buildings. In residential districts, the height and scale of new construction should not exceed that of the majority of historic buildings by more than one-story. In commercial districts, building height shall conform to the established pattern. If there is no more than a 50% variation in the scale of buildings on the adjacent block faces, then the height of the new building shall not exceed the tallest building on the adjacent block face by more than 10%.
- ii. Transitions*—Utilize step-downs in building height, wall-plane offsets, and other variations in building massing to provide a visual transition when the height of new construction exceeds that of adjacent historic buildings by more than one-half story.
- iii. Foundation and floor heights*—Align foundation and floor-to-floor heights (including porches and balconies) within one foot of floor-to-floor heights on adjacent historic structures.

#### B. ROOF FORM

- i. Similar roof forms*—Incorporate roof forms—pitch, overhangs, and orientation—that are consistent with those predominantly found on the block. Roof forms on residential building types are typically sloped, while roof forms on non-residential building types are more typically flat and screened by an ornamental parapet wall.

### C. RELATIONSHIP OF SOLIDS TO VOIDS

*i. Window and door openings*—Incorporate window and door openings with a similar proportion of wall to window space as typical with nearby historic facades. Windows, doors, porches, entryways, dormers, bays, and pediments shall be considered similar if they are no larger than 25% in size and vary no more than 10% in height to width ratio from adjacent historic facades.

*ii. Façade configuration*— The primary façade of new commercial buildings should be in keeping with established patterns. Maintaining horizontal elements within adjacent cap, middle, and base precedents will establish a consistent street wall through the alignment of horizontal parts. Avoid blank walls, particularly on elevations visible from the street. No new façade should exceed 40 linear feet without being penetrated by windows, entryways, or other defined bays.

### D. LOT COVERAGE

*i. Building to lot ratio*— New construction should be consistent with adjacent historic buildings in terms of the building to lot ratio. Limit the building footprint for new construction to no more than 50 percent of the total lot area, unless adjacent historic buildings establish a precedent with a greater building to lot ratio.

## 3. Materials and Textures

### A. NEW MATERIALS

*i. Complementary materials*—Use materials that complement the type, color, and texture of materials traditionally found in the district. Materials should not be so dissimilar as to distract from the historic interpretation of the district. For example, corrugated metal siding would not be appropriate for a new structure in a district comprised of homes with wood siding.

*ii. Alternative use of traditional materials*—Consider using traditional materials, such as wood siding, in a new way to provide visual interest in new construction while still ensuring compatibility.

*iii. Roof materials*—Select roof materials that are similar in terms of form, color, and texture to traditionally used in the district.

*iv. Metal roofs*—Construct new metal roofs in a similar fashion as historic metal roofs. Refer to the Guidelines for Alterations and Maintenance section for additional specifications regarding metal roofs.

*v. Imitation or synthetic materials*—Do not use vinyl siding, plastic, or corrugated metal sheeting. Contemporary materials not traditionally used in the district, such as brick or simulated stone veneer and Hardie Board or other fiberboard siding, may be appropriate for new construction in some locations as long as new materials are visually similar to the traditional material in dimension, finish, and texture. EIFS is not recommended as a substitute for actual stucco.

## 4. Architectural Details

### A. GENERAL

*i. Historic context*—Design new buildings to reflect their time while respecting the historic context. While new construction should not attempt to mirror or replicate historic features, new structures should not be so dissimilar as to distract from or diminish the historic interpretation of the district.

*ii. Architectural details*—Incorporate architectural details that are in keeping with the predominant architectural style along the block face or within the district when one exists. Details should be simple in design and should complement, but not visually compete with, the character of the adjacent historic structures or other historic structures within the district. Architectural details that are more ornate or elaborate than those found within the district are inappropriate.

*iii. Contemporary interpretations*—Consider integrating contemporary interpretations of traditional designs and details for new construction. Use of contemporary window moldings and door surroundings, for example, can provide visual interest while helping to convey the fact that the structure is new. Modern materials should be implemented in a way that does not distract from the historic structure.

## FINDINGS:

- a. Conceptual approval is the review of general design ideas and principles (such as scale and setback). Specific design details reviewed at this stage are not binding and may only be approved through a Certificate of Appropriateness for final approval.
- b. The lot currently bounded by N Flores to the east, W Travis to the north, Camaron to the west and W Houston to the south currently features surface parking which covers the eastern half of the lot, a motor bank canopy and teller building on the western half of the lot, a stone wall which runs parallel to W Houston and trees which border the lot on each side. There are no historic structures located on the lot. This property falls within the boundaries for the proposed River Improvement Overlay District 7. The current zoning is Downtown and Historic.
- c. This case was reviewed by the Design Review Committee on the tower's proposed orientation, landscaping, massing and the inclusion of ground level retail to be incorporated within the structured parking.
- d. FAÇADE ORIENTATION – The Guidelines for New Construction 1.A. and B states that the facades of new construction should align with the front façade of adjacent structures, should be oriented consistently with adjacent and nearby structures and should feature primary building entrances that are oriented towards street frontage. The applicant has proposed for the tower to occupy the western-most portion of the site to address N Flores Street with a parking garage wrapped in retail to address W Travis, Camaron and W Houston Streets. Staff finds the applicant's proposal to orient primary and secondary entrances and well as retail space toward each street appropriate and consistent with the Guidelines.
- e. SCALE & MASS – New construction for properties zoned Historic should feature building massing and form that is comparable to surrounding parcels. The applicant has proposed a structure to feature 23 floors and approximately 385 feet in height. There are various structures featuring multiple floors in the immediate vicinity including the existing Frost Tower, the Weston Centre, the Wyndham San Antonio Riverwalk and the historic Robert E Lee Hotel. Staff finds the proposed height appropriate.
- f. FAÇADE CONFIGURATION – The facades of new commercial buildings should be in keeping with established patterns. Maintaining horizontal elements within adjacent building sections such as a base, midsection and cap establishes consistency within the street wall. The applicant has proposed a base which includes a transparent glass and internal sunshades, a mid-section of octagonal shimmering facets and a tapering shaft and a capital featuring a tapering crown element. This is consistent with the Guidelines.
- g. LOT COVERAGE – New construction should be consistent with nearby structures in regards to a building to lot ratio. Many structures in the immediate vicinity cover large majorities of the lot if not all of the lot. The applicant's proposal is consistent with the Guidelines.
- h. MATERIALS – The applicant has proposed materials that primarily consist of a glass curtainwall system for the tower and a patterned metal scrim. Staff finds these materials appropriate and consistent with examples found in the vicinity of the proposed tower.
- i. ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS – The Guidelines for New Construction 4.A.iii. recommends the integration of contemporary interpretations of traditional design and details for new construction. The applicant has noted that the proposed octagonal design utilizes facets on each side to reduce the bulk of the structure's massing and to create a memorable presence that recalls San Antonio's earliest skyscrapers, the Emily Morgan Hotel and the Tower Life Building. Staff finds the applicant's contemporary interpretations appropriate.
- j. MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT – According to the Guidelines for New Construction 6.A. and B., all mechanical equipment should be screened from the public right of way. The applicant has noted that the proposed architectural crown is to screen all rooftop mechanical equipment. This is consistent with the Guidelines.
- k. LIGHTING – The applicant has noted that the tower will feature LED pin-striping at the tower's edges to enhance the tower's presence in the skyline at night. Staff finds that the applicant's proposed lighting will not negatively impact any nearby historic features. The applicant is responsible for providing staff with a complete site and architectural lighting plan prior to returning to the HDRC for final approval.
- l. PARKING GARAGE – The applicant has noted that the proposed structured parking is to feature two curb cuts on W Travis, one curb cut on Camaron, is to feature street level retail and is to be clad with a metal screen. Staff finds the applicant's proposal appropriate. The applicant is responsible for providing detailed elevations of each of the garage's facades as well as information regarding the width of the proposed curb cuts.
- m. LANDSCAPING – The applicant has provided information regarding the location of landscaped areas as well as a narrative explaining the inclusion of a garden adjacent to pedestrian sidewalks. The applicant is responsible for

providing a detailed landscaping plan prior to returning to the HDRC for final approval.

- n. **ARCHAEOLOGY** – The property is adjacent to the local Main and Military Plaza Historic District, the Main and Military Plaza National Register of Historic Places District, and San Pedro Creek. In addition, the project area is in close proximity to the San Pedro or Principal Acequia, the Spanish Colonial Plaza de Armas and Plaza de las Islas, and previously recorded archaeological site 41BX1598. Moreover, historic archival maps from the 18th century show structures within the project boundaries. Therefore, archaeological investigations shall be required for the project area. The archaeology consultant should submit the scope of work to the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) for review and approval prior to the commencement of field efforts.

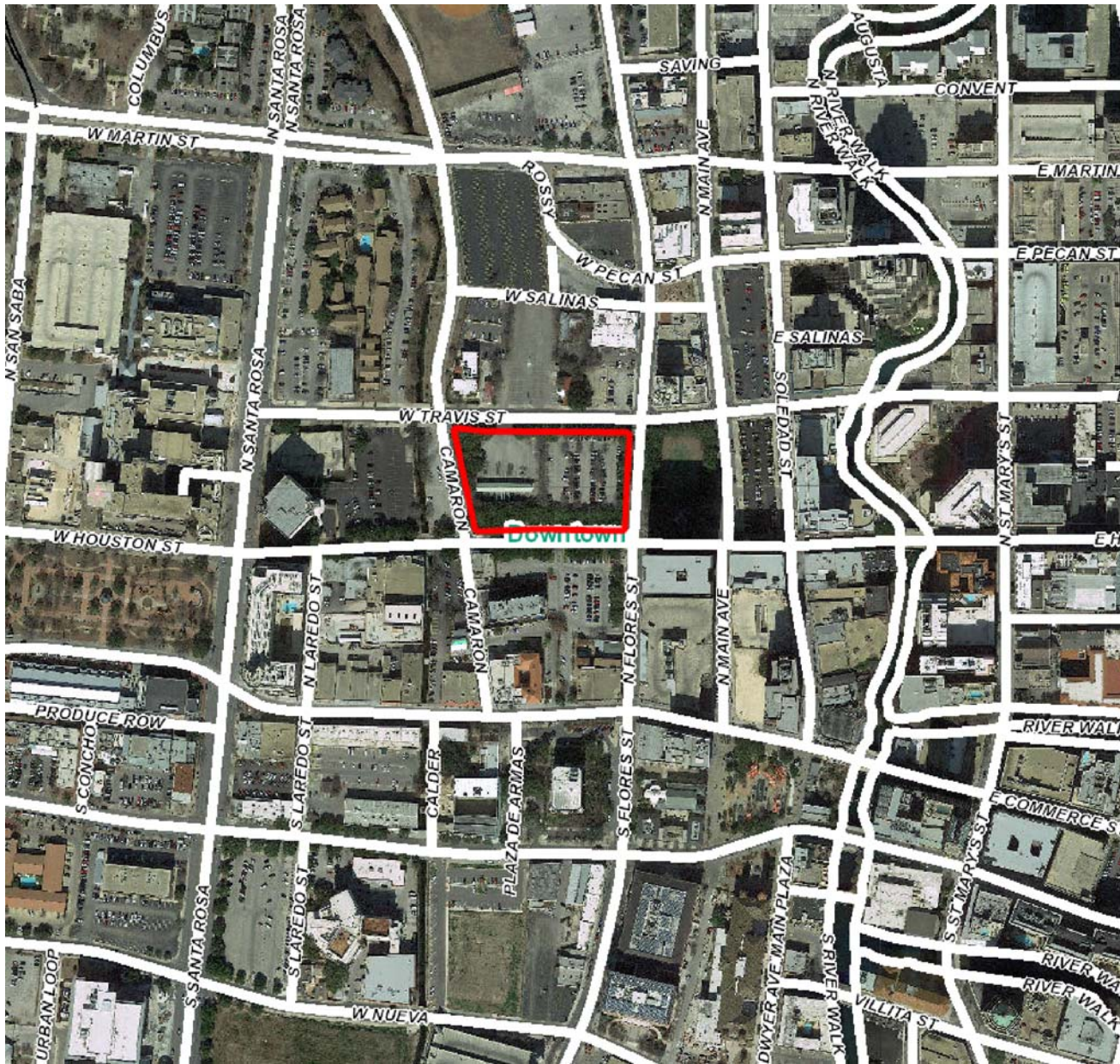
**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends conceptual approval based on findings a through n with the following stipulations:

- i. That the applicant provide staff with a detailed landscaping plan prior to returning to the HDRC for final approval.
- ii. That the applicant provide staff with a detailed site and architectural lighting plan prior to returning to the HDRC for final approval.
- iii. That the applicant provide staff with detailed elevations of each of the garage's facades prior to returning to the HDRC for final approval.
- iv. That the applicant provide staff with information regarding the width of each proposed curb cut prior to returning to the HDRC for final approval.
- v. Archaeological investigations are required. The archaeological scope of work should be submitted to the OHP archaeologists for review and approval prior to the commencement of field efforts. The development project shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations regarding archaeology.

**CASE MANAGER:**

Edward Hall



## Flex Viewer

Powered by ArcGIS Server

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Riverview Towers

Main Plaza

San Fernando Cathedral

Military Plaza

N Flores St

N Flores St

W Houston St

W Travis St

W Travis St

Cameron St

W Salinas

Cameron St

San Fernando Gym

CVS Pharmacy

CVS Pharmacy

Santa Rosa St



Cameron St

W Houston St

N Main St

W Houston St

Cameron St



N Flores St

W Travis St

W Travis St

E Travis St

W Salinas



CITY of SAN ANTONIO  
NOTICE of HEARING  
HISTORIC & DESIGN  
REVIEW COMMISSION

ADDRESS: 436 W HOUSTON  
REQUEST: CONSIDERATION OF AN OFFICE TOWER  
HEARING DATE: JULY 20, 2016

TIME: 3:00 P.M.  
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT  
(214) 214-9774  
ALL HDRC MEETINGS TAKE PLACE AT 1901 S. ALAMO





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Frost Tower is located on the block surrounded by W. Houston Street on the south, Camaron Street on the west, W. Travis Street on the north and N. Flores Street on the east. This block occupies a unique position within the city of San Antonio and calls for a sensitive design solution that responds to its importance within the urban core. Bounded by public space on three sides – the park to the east, the significant allée of live oaks on Houston Street and San Pedro Creek on the west – Frost Tower is positioned to be an active mixed-use development within a green pedestrian environment.

The site strategy is to place passive uses such as the office tower lobby on the park to the east and active uses with retail on the western side adjacent to San Pedro Creek. This results in taller massing towards the park and the Central Business District and lower massing along San Pedro Creek to enhance the pedestrian environment envisioned.

A prime goal of the project is to reinforce the promenade along W. Houston Street from the Alamo to Milam Park. The project capitalizes on the use of San Pedro Creek and neighborhood pathways to create a great pedestrian environment that connects to nearby cultural institutions, downtown parks, and historic sites. The new urban environment highlights San Antonio's varied presence in tourism, finance, and technology.

Retail activates the W. Houston Street promenade with direct access to outdoor plazas and seating under the grand allée of live oak trees. A goal of the project has been to actively encourage pedestrian circulation along W. Houston Street connecting the city center to the historic Alameda Theater and reinforce the pedestrian environment along San Pedro Creek.

The pedestrian path along Houston Street has a variety of uses with direct public access to programmed outdoor spaces that capitalize on the allée of live oak trees. On the corner of N. Flores Street and W. Houston Street one of the octagonal tower faces addresses an entrance plaza with access to the tower. The W. Houston Street side of the tower will be occupied by a retail tenant that will have access to an outdoor terrace for seating. At the base of the six-story parking garage on Houston, a continuous retail environment is carefully integrated with the landscape. There are two distinct pedestrian pathways parallel to W. Houston Street: a wide path beneath the canopy of live oak trees and another along the sidewalk edge adjacent to W. Houston Street. Perpendicular paved pathways tie directly into projected glass retail bays that have canopies above the doors. Retail occupants will have the ability to place street furniture on these paved entryways to animate the pedestrian environment. The W. Houston Street sidewalk has been interspersed with parallel parking and live oak trees to improve the existing condition today. The integration of outdoor public space adjacent to retail mitigates the heat island effect by providing comfortable spaces to gather and the opportunity for urban wildlife.

The project has worked closely with the San Pedro Creek Redevelopment Team to create an integrated public response to the western facade. Retail runs from corner to corner along the Camaron Street facade adjacent to a sidewalk that is planted with live oak trees. An entrance to the garage has been narrowed from three lanes to two lanes and reduced in height to allow only automobiles to enter.

Careful treatment of the paving will signal the safe coexistence of pedestrians and automobiles along this active path adjacent the San Pedro Creek redevelopment.

W. Travis Street has been enhanced by extending the sidewalk to incorporate trees and parallel car parking. Access to the parking garage and loading dock along Travis Street reinforces the city's goal of maintaining this thoroughfare as a service street. Walls that enclose mechanical zones and the loading dock will be screened with obscured glass and landscape planting to make the pedestrian experience pleasant. The precast parking garage will be enclosed with options for a patterned scrim that is at least 50% open animating the façade above the trees.

The tower base on W. Travis Street and along N. Flores Street has been softened with a line of live oak trees and a garden adjacent to a pedestrian sidewalk. In the tradition of San Antonio skyscrapers, the building comes to grade but only occupies a third of the frontage, leaving the rest of the land as naturally landscaped plazas and gardens. Clear glass at the base of the building allows for the tower to act as a pavilion within the park. Transparency provides clear views into the lobby, retail bank, and retail occupant for those who pass along on the sidewalks.

Frost Tower has an iconic form based on the tradition of classic skyscrapers. The tower reinforces a connection to the Central Business District by striking a distinct silhouette on the skyline, marking its place adjacent to the park. The octagonal form of the tower utilizes facets on each side to reduce the bulk of massing and to create a memorable presence that recalls the earliest skyscrapers of San Antonio, like the Emily Morgan Hotel and the Tower Life Building. Rather than a series of traditional setbacks, the tower form tapers as it rises to create an elegant form that diminishes as the pleated facets increase. The tower is capped with an integrated crown, screening mechanical equipment, as the facets are cut to create a dynamic silhouette against the sky. The design intent has never been to copy the solidity of the original masonry skyscrapers in San Antonio, but rather continue the formal massing strategy in a modern building that uses a contemporary vocabulary.

The tower enclosure is a high-performance glass curtainwall system that optimizes energy performance while creating Class A office space with panoramic views of the city. The slightly reflective curtainwall system meets the International Energy Conservation Code of 2015. The enclosure's performance shades 50% more sun than clear glass, is 75% more energy efficient than clear glass, and screens 82% more ultraviolet radiation than clear glass. Overall, the curtainwall system allows for 70% less heat energy infiltration than clear glass and creates a building which conserves energy and optimizes performance, symbolizing the values of Frost Bank and the City of San Antonio.

The tower is divided into three distinct facade zones appropriate to their response within the city context. The base, which contains the lobby, retail bank, and commercial retail, can be viewed as a glassy pavilion within a park. This zone in the building is clad in transparent glass with internal sunshades above to allow a visual connection for pedestrians looking in and for occupants looking out to the landscape. The middle of the tower is a series of octagonal shimmering facets, which enclose the shaft as it tapers towards the top of the tower. The crown cuts a silhouette against the sky, making it unique within the core of San Antonio. Integrated night lighting will utilize LED pin-striping at the edges of the tower form that will enhance the tower's presence in the skyline of San Antonio. Frost Tower will become a new icon in San Antonio marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Frost Bank and the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of San Antonio.

# FROST TOWER

SAN ANTONIO TEXAS







CENTRAL LIBRARY

SOUTHWEST SCHOOL OF ART

TOBIN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

SAN PEDRO CREEK PROJECT

WESTON CENTRE

TRAVIS PARK

ZONA CULTURAL PHASE 2

ZONA CULTURAL PHASE 1

SAN PEDRO AMPHITHEATER

SITE

MILAM PARK

ALAMEDA SCHOOL FOR ART & DESIGN

FROST BANK FINANACIAL CENTER

THE ALAMO

HISTORIC MARKET SQUARE

THE EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

MAIN PLAZA

UTSA DOWNTOWN CAMPUS

LA VILLITA HISTORIC ARTS VILLAGE

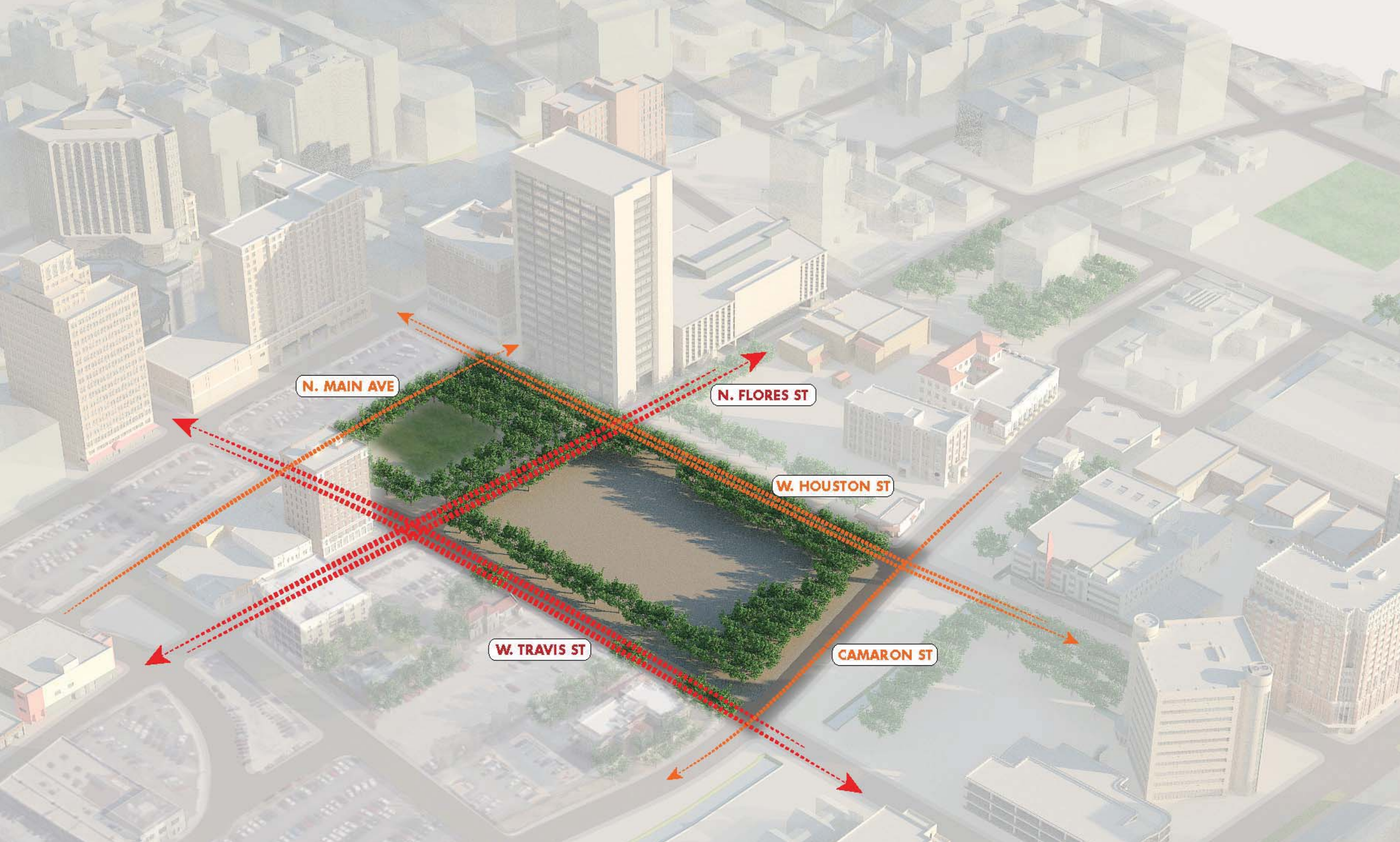
CONVENTION CENER

TOWER OF THE AMERICAS









**N. MAIN AVE**

**N. FLORES ST**

**W. HOUSTON ST**

**W. TRAVIS ST**

**CAMARON ST**

TRAVIS STREET

N FLORES STREET

CAMARON STREET

HOUSTON STREET

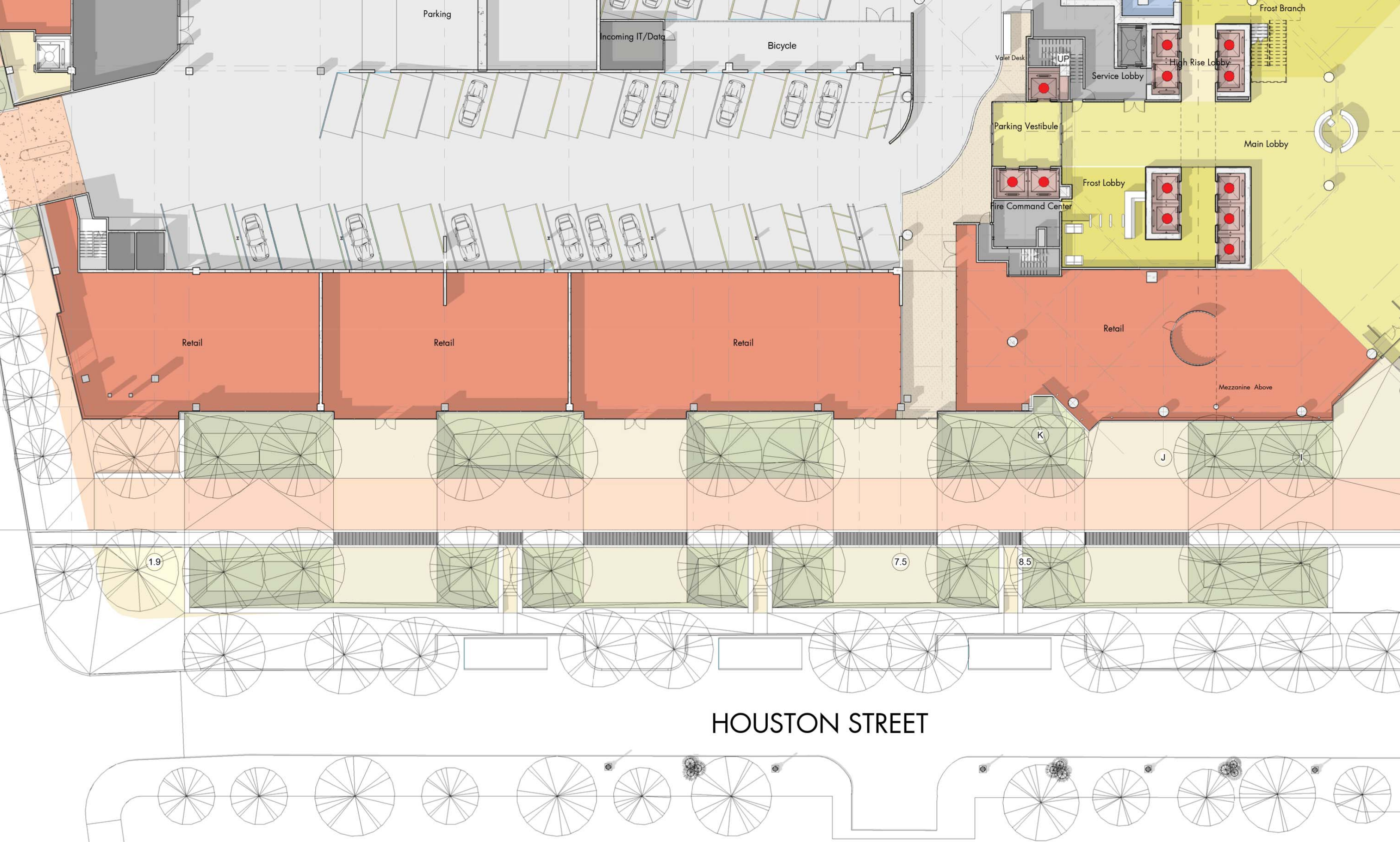




LET'S RODEO  
SAN ANTONIO!







HOUSTON STREET







