mi tierra

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prepared by
san antonio
city planning dept.

MI TIERRA

A project, originating from the workable program for community improvement, for elimination and prevention of blight through self-help.

MI TIERRA

Mi Tierra, a report on areas of concentrated blight in corporate San Antonio, has been prepared for the explicit purpose of acquainting interested parties with the existence and growth of slum areas within the City. It is further hoped that this report will serve as a mainspring in the conception of new ideas which might be applied to the arrestment and elimination of slum growth.

Eight sections of the City have been designated as areas of major concern. The map following this report shows the areas of concern along with a chart indicating the extent of social and physical blight, within each area. With the exception of deteriorated and/or dilapidated residential structures, the manifestations of blight vary from one area to another.

As such, these areas do not, in all cases, pinpoint the heaviest concentrations of a particular aspect of blight, but represent central cores within larger blighted sections. Each area contains one or more "cores" of blighted conditions. These cores are usually located where the residential dwelling units are below - standard (deteriorated and/or dilapidated) and the population density per developed acre is noticably higher than the surrounding environment.

The areas A, B, and C comprise the major concentrations of physical and social blight on the western side of the central business district. On first consideration, it would seem that these concentrations engulf the entire central west side of town. This is not the case; however, without the development of some

SCALE 1" = 3200'

AREAS A,B&C

general goals and a localized program of community improvement, it could very easily become the situation.

Much of the area between these concentrations if by most considerations standard in relation to the adjacent cores of social and physical blight. However, the immediacy of location and recognition of blighted conditions give use to familiarity and acceptance of the social aspect of blight; disease, crime, very low educational achievement in basic skills, and the devastating influence of welfare as a way of life which knows no boundary. At no cost, should these conditions be allowed to impinge upon the neighboring areas of relative stable environmental standards. In this relationship of familiarity and acceptance San Antonio will likely experience an expansion of existing slum cores unless present conditions are arrested and eliminated.

Initial stages of transition are discernible on the central - west side in areas of relative standard condition. This is due to the overpowering observation of the "prefabricated" slums, residential structures which were constructed on 25 foot lots and allowed, with no maintenance, to deteriorate. These "standard", though transitional, areas are perhaps the most effective physical assets to a program of blight prevention. Socially, the residential structures in these areas are usually owner-occupied. As such, there is an element of relative stability and pride of ownership which tends to be of a supportive nature.

It is primarily to these transitional areas that plans for prevention should be directed. Rehabilitation projects should be initiated in these areas which would serve to unify them even further. In every rehabilitation

SCALE 1" = 2000'

AREA C

project an attempt should be made to include one of the eight designated cores of concentrated blight. In effect this serves as visible proof and reinforcement to the area's residents of the concern of others for the well-being of the area. This has long been missing.

Rehabilitation, if taken in an orderly, comprehensive fashion for the entire central - west side, should probably begin with a program in the northern portion of area "C", or in the southern portion of area "B". This, of course, would be a break from total clearance projects attempted in the past.

Now is the time for such a break, for two reasons. First, this section has had the distinction for some time of being the worst slum area of the City. As such, many interviews, small-group projects, and so on, all conducted

with no direct, noticeable action for improvement have led the inhabitants of this section of the City to refer to themselves as test tubes. This begins to have obvious effects on the feasibility of any action - oriented project with citizen participation in mind. Secondly, a project here would establish a starting point for systematically defining existing slums.

A second project should be located in area "A" and should be initiated soon after the above is effective. This area, consisting of a central core of dilapidated and deteriorated structures, is the western extension of the City's west - central slum area. Insofar as the land area adjacent to the west of area "A" is largely vacant and without utilities, this project could prove to be a determining force in the prevention of the spread of blight from area "A" into the undevel-

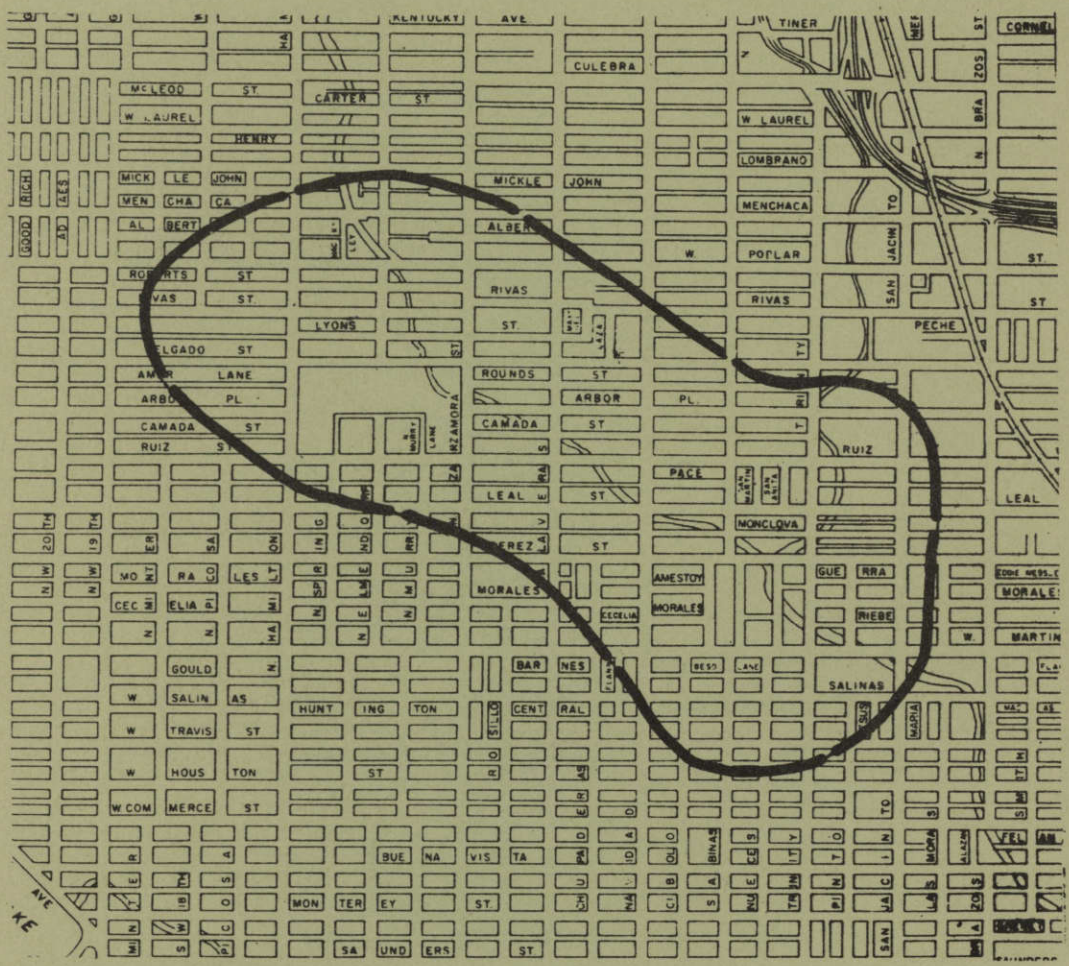
SCALE 1"=2000'

AREA A

oped area. To be sure, there are a few pockets of very substandard physical and social disorders in this vacant area at the present time. Through the combined efforts of the Department of Housing and the Department of Public Works, some of the problems of these "pockets" are now being eliminated.

A third project should be in area "B". If effected, these three projects, would constitute a very clear boundary of the west - central slum areas. Equally important are the interest and motivational factors that could stem from these projects to those citizens of adjacent areas.

As may be seen, there are many deteriorated and dilapidated structures within the core of the west - central area which can only be touched by total clearance. However, just as the programs of Urban Renewal, if taken in a system-



SCALE 1" = 2000'

AREA B

atic frame of reference for a comprehensive, city - wide goal, can alleviate blighted conditions and even establish through meaningful land resale, an environment which is conducive to the prevention of blight, a program of self - help or citizen participation in the same comprehensive plan could alleviate the blighted conditions which are outside the activity range of Urban Renewal.

Area "D" according to the 1960 census contained the largest single concentration of deteriorated and dilapidated residential structures in the City. Along the main thoroughfares in this area, the commercial structures are of the same appearance. A program for elimination of blight in this area, which serves as the southern boundary of the Central Business District, would work mainly for the larger goal of preventing a future slum.

SCALE 1" = 2000'

AREA D

SCALE 1":2000'

AREA E

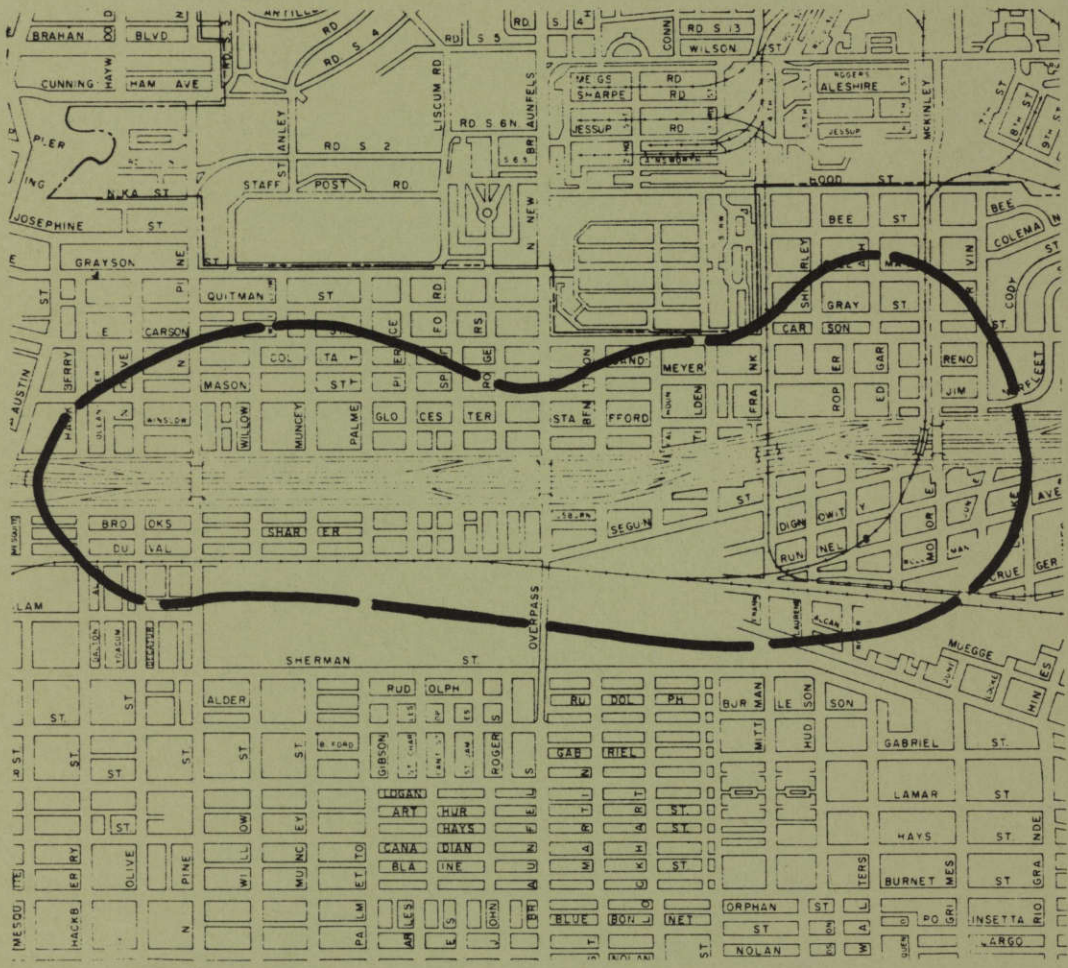
By far the most ambiguous area covered in this study, area "E" consists of industrial and commercial establishments, sections of well maintained two-story residential structures and five cores of very blighted residential conditions. Each blighted core in this section is presently contained within an area of several blocks.

Being bound by industry on north and west, the northern portion of area "E" for the most part is a "settled" neighborhood with respect to growth limits, and "stable" with respect to the number of well maintained owner - occupied housing units. South of Houston Street, however, the physical character of the area changes radically. The mixed land use remains, but in an overall condition of blight. Deteriorated and dilapidated renter - occupied housing units are mixed with commer-

cial and industrial uses of the same physical condition.

These pockets or centers of blight are of sufficient magnitude to warrant an Urban Renewal total clearance project. However, a comprehensive program which would involve the citizens of the area and in which to relate such a project is not available for this section at the present time. (With the Hemisfair grounds reverting to use as a permanent convention complex on the western edge of area "E" this project should be considered one of the most important single area projects within the City.)

Area "F" located to the north of area "E" and to the south of Fort Sam Houston, U. S. Government's 4th Army Headquarters, is basically residential with the exception of New Braunfels Avenue which is a hodge - podge of commercial uses at the south entrance to Ft. Sam Houston.



SCALE 1"=2000'

AREA F

Some of the "cores" of blight in this area are quite possibly due to the stagnate nature of the area, being blocked on the North and East by Ft. Sam and on the South and West by limited access expressways and mixed commercial and industrial land use. Relative inaccessibility such as dead - end streets, high traffic volume, minor streets, limited access to expressways and a number of poorly maintained streets account for a portion of this stagnated nature.

Area "G" has many factors which should be taken into consideration in a comprehensive plan for the area. For instance there are a large number of schools and churches which form "groups" of people who, if provided with "tools", could eliminate the blighted conditions that are within their capabilities. In this area, these "tools" might consist of oriented programs of fire prevention instruction, pest con-

SCALE 1" = 2000'

AREA G

trol, etc., as has been tried before in other cities.

Expressway I.H. 10 has eliminated a large portion of the deteriorated and dilapidated sections of areas "G". Southward from the expressway, a wide strip of land is undeveloped. An all out effort should be made to prevent the spread of blight into this area as it developes.

In the northern portion of area "G" lies a transitional area from the heavy residential quality characteristic of the immediate east and south, to the mixed commercial and industrial concentrations on its northern boundary. Of the blighted area found in "G" this is the worst section. In a comprehensive plan this portion should be involved in total clearance while the area south to the expressway should be concerned with rehabilitation and partial clearance.

In each area of concern in this study, all conditions of blight were seen to be in relation to deteriorated and delapi-

dated residential structures, although it was not assumed that the condition of the residential structures "caused" the other manifestations of blight. In area "G" there are no highly concentrated manifestations of blight other than the condition of residential and commercial structures; yet, from the experience of other cities, this area should be considered an area in transition.

This area will possibly turn from one of merely bad housing, to a true slum with all the attendant manifestations of blight. For the most part, a program in this area aimed at the elimination of blight would have to be based on a program of self - help beginning with the owners who occupy their housing units. A program of at least minimum code enforcement should be included in such a project. Total clearance through an Urban Renewal Program would be limited due to the present potential resale possibilities within area "G".

SCALE 1"=2000'

AREA H

A program of minimum housing code enforcement in area "H" would be of unlimited value. Included in this area are all the manisfestations of a physical slum with poor sanitary conditions. Conditions exist such as poorly maintained chicken and pigeon coops, horse and cattle corrals and an excessive number of pit toilets which create various sanitary problems. These conditions should not be allowed, permited or tollerated in San Antonio in this day and time.

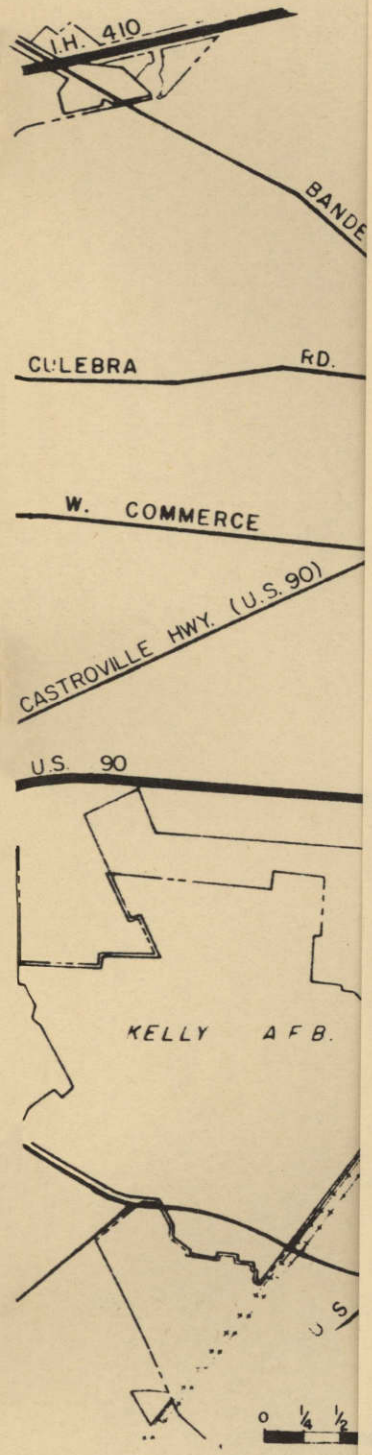
The concept of "self-help" is not intended to be effected as a gigantic neighborhood "clean-up, fix-up" campaign. This aspect of a self-help program is, to be sure, one of great importance. But to approach, for instance, area "H" with a "clean-up, fix-up" program, is to entertain dreams and invite no citizen participation. Area "C", however, has before enjoyed the activity and sense of accomplishement

resulting from a self-help program. The concept is not a tool to justify implementation of city-derived projects through helpful organizations. The concept is rather, the basis for effecting the resources and ideas of individuals, organizations, the City, and the citizens themselves, into a viable, meaningful, action-oriented program that of self-help.

Other problems certainly exist within the area mentioned in this report and undoubtably other areas of blight might exist; however, we feel at this time that the above eight areas deserve our immediate consideration. Arrestment and elimination of blight in these areas will serve as a base for future programs of bettering the living standards of our lower income group.

STATISTICS OF SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL BLIGHT

AREAS OF BLIGHT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Communicable Diseases 1964	20	38	54	12	28	11	7	12
Crimes Against Persons 1966	8	18	23	5	6	6	1	4
Welfare Cases 1965	69	45	166	41	38	13	34	18
Population/Developed Acres 1965	25	29	31	18	23	14	9	5
Residential Structures 1960 (by City Block)								
Standard	39	55	28	11	11	36	11	27
50% deteriorated & 20% dilapidated	59	42	40	26	8	43	30	20
50% deteriorated or 20% dilapidated	13	10	19	10	4	20	12	4
Commercial Buildings								
Percent substandard 1966	10%	10%	20%	20%	0	0	10%	15%
Streets-Dirt, Gravel or unimproved (in miles) 1964	.1	No	.7	.2	No	No	1.1	2.2
Pit Toilets 1963	16	1	No	No	No	1	93	71
Fires 1966	13	30	48	19	31	22	14	8



hemisfair

central business district

cores of blight

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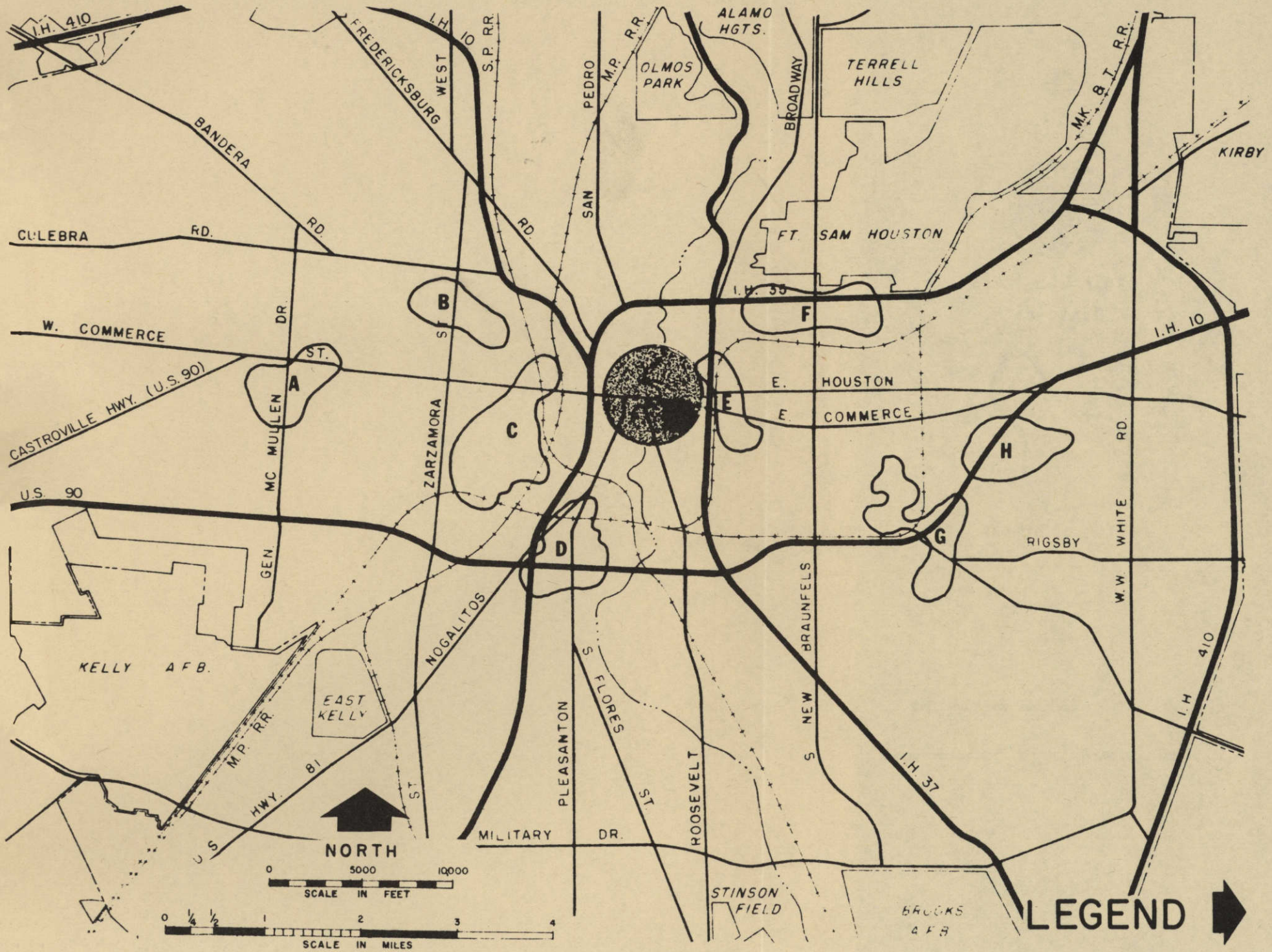
SCALE IN MILES

LEGEND


I.H. 410
FREDERICKSBURG RD.
I.H. 10 WEST
S.P. R.R.
SAN PEDRO
M.P. R.R.
OLMOS PARK
ALAMO HGTS.
BROADWAY
TERRELL HILLS
MK & T R.R.
KIRBY
BANDERA RD.
CULEBRA RD.
FT. SAM HOUSTON
I.H. 35
W. COMMERCE ST.
CASTROVILLE HWY. (U.S. 90)
MC MULLEN DR.
ZARZAMORA ST.
E. HOUSTON
E. COMMERCE
I.H. 10
U.S. 90
GEN. MC MULLEN
NOGALITOS
RIGSBY
WHITE RD.
W.W.
KELLY A.F.B.
EAST KELLY
M.P. R.R.
U.S. HWY. 81
S. FLORES ST.
PLEASANTON
ROOSEVELT
S. NEW BRAUNFELS
I.H. 37
I.H. 410
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