

THE DESIGN ATTRIBUTES OF IDENTITY  
IN REVITALIZED COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS:  
IMPLICATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS  
OF THE BISHOP ARTS DISTRICT

by

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Abstract

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This thesis uses qualitative research methods to study the design attributes of identity in revitalized neighborhood commercial districts. Using the Bishop Arts District as a case study, the thesis analyzes the perceptions of stakeholders and the researcher's on-site observations to understand how design attributes reinforce the identity of these districts.

Neighborhood commercial district revitalization is one type of urban revitalization. Its goal is to introduce a commercial shopping district into a former industrial or retail area within a historic neighborhood, where a "sense of place" can be produced and consumed (Chang, 2011, p.5). This approach became popular because it would not only preserve the historic features of the districts, but also emphasize the identity by reinforcing the design attributes which carry historical and cultural value.

The neighborhood of Bishop Arts was chosen based on the district's revitalization approach of "coexistence of original residents and creative industry practitioners" (Sun, 2010, i). This research investigates design attributes through field observation in the Bishop Art District. Visual design factors are studied and recorded in photographs which

address district scale, perception of space, architecture, symbols, materials, and other static and dynamic factors. Additionally, in-depth interviews with visitors and owners are set up to provide knowledge of the individual's experience and opinions. The data are then refined and evaluated to determine the contribution of the attributes.

Data comparisons and findings from the neighborhood define a series of design attributes which contribute to the identity of this particular historic neighborhood commercial revitalization. Findings and interview results also suggest that a visual catalog of design attributes can be employed for future revitalization projects that would address neighborhood scale to design details.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

Since the SoHo neighborhood in New York City became a classic example of urban revitalization, strategies for a re-flourishing inner city district have included the gentrification of historic neighborhoods that have been deteriorated by social or economic problems. Preservation-based neighborhood revitalization has focused on preserving the unique regional character of the district (Garnham, 1985) and encouraging private owners to open small businesses and stores to serve the surrounding neighborhoods.

As Jane Jacobs writes:

The district, and indeed as many of its internal parts as possible, must serve more than one primary function; preferably more than two. These must insure the presence of people who go outdoors on different schedules and are in the place for different purposes, who are able to use many facilities in common (Jane Jacobs, 1961, p53).

This research focuses on neighborhood commercial district revitalization as a study area because it is considered a dominant development strategy by cities across United States (Chang, 2011). One of characteristics that make neighborhood commercial revitalization different from other revitalization approaches is “sense of place” (Chang, 2011). Therefore, how people experience the place matters in the neighborhood commercial revitalization. To landscape architects and designers, “the emphasis is on design attributes of identity and if or not they hold ‘sense of place’, which are ultimately the goals of a preservationist in commercial district revitalization” (Chang, 2011. p.13) is critical to understand in order to determine its value as a key part of future projects.

The Bishop Arts District is a unique neighborhood commercial revitalization project in Dallas, which displays many characteristics of revitalization. This project was

initiated by developers, and refined over time by the efforts of small business and fine art culture resettlement.

Gentrification also occurred along with the commercial revitalization, and it has spurred revitalization in the surrounding area. The physical features of the conversion of the Bishop Arts District, credited with commercial revitalization and historic preservation, interests the researcher to study the project's unique identity through its design attributes.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The Bishop Arts District is a popular shopping destination in the Oak Cliff community. It is home to restaurants, bars, shops and galleries. Based on on-site observations, the commercial district is expanding. More retail is opening and more properties are prepared to be redeveloped. Although the residents living around the area are low to low-middle income class, the Bishop Arts District "is fueling a renaissance of the entire area" (cbsdfw.com, news, n.d.) to bring more economic opportunities. Other streets and areas near the Bishop Arts District, such as Jefferson Boulevard, were proposed for revitalization to create a more pedestrian orientated and mixed use district for Oak Cliff (Appleton, 2012).

Neighborhood revitalization projects like the Bishop Arts District have been researched in terms of economics and policy making by many planners. This means it was often examined in the conditions of economic, social and demographic information to trace the changes (Ahlbrandt and Brophy, 1975). However, little research has been done to study commercial revitalization in Dallas Fort Worth area and pay close attention to the design attributes based on perceptions of stakeholders. Through this study of design attributes, the findings provide the foundation for the understanding of the character of this local revitalized neighborhood commercial district (Deming and Swaffield, 2011).

### 1.3 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the study is to understand the design attributes that contribute to identity of a revitalized neighborhood commercial district through the perceptions of its stakeholders, including the people from the Dallas Fort Worth area and the larger region. From these attributes and perceptions, implications are drawn for future designers and developers who will be interested in revitalized neighborhood commercial districts.

The Bishop Arts District is studied as a representative of revitalized historic commercial districts in Dallas. This research is twofold. On one hand, it lends an opportunity to examine the project by studying it from a design perspective. On the other hand, it exposes how physical design attributes contribute to the identity and character of a revitalized neighborhood commercial district, and how they grant an emotional connection between stakeholders and the district. Examination of the design attributes of a revitalization project can be a valuable asset to design professionals. It can be an additional resource for strengthening the existing research and can help to provide more solutions (Francis, 2001).

### 1.4 Research Questions

The research questions for this thesis are as follows:

1. What are the present design attributes in the Bishop Arts District?
2. Do the design attributes reflect an identity for the district?
3. Which design attributes contribute most to enhance visitors' experience in the district?

### 1.5 Definition of Terms

Attribute: An inherent characteristic of a place.

Case study strategy: A research strategy. It is a "complex multifaceted investigation into a particular place" to help "achieve explanatory value" (Deming and

Swaffield, 2011, p.80). It is used to “narrow and focus the investigation” (Deming and Swaffield, 2011, p.79) and to give readers a better understanding of the issues.

Commercial district revitalization: A strategy of invigorating small business and retail to promote service for residential neighborhoods (Chang, 2010, Sutton, 2010).

Design attributes: For the purpose of this thesis, the visual and tangible components preserved added and/or improved by design professionals, which collectively contribute to the distinct identity of a place.

Gentrification: A process by which middle and upper class members of society resettle into the neighborhoods which have experienced decline and displace earlier poorer residents. Deteriorating neighborhoods which have distinctive architecture are often renovated by artists and small retail and reinvested in with private and public funds (Clay, 1979).

Grounded theory: “A method for discovering theories, concepts, hypotheses, and propositions directly from data rather than from a priori assumptions, other research, or existing theoretical frameworks” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 37)

Identity: “Identity of something refers to a persistent sameness and unity which allows that thing to be differentiated from others” (Relph, 1976, p. 45, as cited by Noormohammdi, 2012).

Neighborhood revitalization: A series of programs to save population and business loss that has occurred in the city by improving the living environment of neighborhoods (Clay, 1979).

Qualitative method: To research and develop themes from descriptive data such as interviews (Taylor, Bogdan, 1998, p. 7).

Snowballing sampling: A sampling technique to recruit future participants based on existing participants' acquaintances.

Sense of place: How people define themselves and community identity based on relationships between people, land and events (Convery, I. et al., 2012).

SoHo neighborhood: A mixed use neighborhood in Manhattan, New York. It is a classic gentrification revitalization. It is famous for its residential studios and galleries that have been converted from industrial lofts (Shkuda, 2010).

Stakeholders: Individuals or entities that have a vested interest in a an affair. They may include community leaders, business owners, and residents. Visitors to the study area are considered stakeholders for the purposes of this research because visitors participating in interviews include residents.

Triangulation: Comparing the data collect from different, often three or more informants to gain a deep understanding to research objects (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, Deming and Swaffield, 2011).

Upgrading: A form of neighborhood revitalization that calls for the physical improvement of housing by incumbent residents (Clay, 1979).

## 1.6 Research Methods

This research uses the qualitative research method of case study strategy (Deming and Swaffied, 2011) to define the design attributes that contribute to the identity of the revitalized neighborhood commercial district. Next, by recording field observations and interviews with real estate professionals, business owners and visitors, the design attributes of the Bishop Arts District are identified. Background knowledge of the study district is collected as secondary information. Observations include the study of secondary documents such as historical studies and context maps, and the recording of the site attributes through photographs. Open-ended interviews are conducted. Institutional human subject approval is required from Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Arlington (See Appendix A).

The study objective is strongly related to individual experience. A triangulation process is considered in the selection of interviewees and data analysis because three types of respondents are chosen to represent interests and perceptions. The three respondent categories include real estate professionals, business owners and visitors. Interview data are analyzed by using grounded theory (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998), comparing with the data from observation and then refining the themes.

### 1.7 Significance and Limitations

The data collected for this research can be a source for further research in neighborhood commercial revitalization in the Dallas Fort Worth area. The findings help to define a series of design attributes which are common to this particular historic neighborhood commercial district.

When conducting the research study, there are some limitations. Participants chosen for on-site for interviews may not be familiar enough with the Bishop Arts District to describe meaningful perceptions of the district's design attributes. Snowball sampling could be a remedy to recruit participants who may know the Bishop Arts District well. The broad range of professions covered by the respondents presents a limitation of the interviewee's knowledge of urban issues. Although design attributes may be obvious to understand and describe, a broader understanding of urban context and development may be a challenge to them. The interview participants considered as visitors may not have a strong emotional connection with the Bishop Arts District. The identification with design attributes related to "sense of place" from this group of people may not be as strong as with other participants. Another limitation involves differences in the interview settings. The different experiences could affect people's subjectivity of judgments (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998).

Whether or not the data will provide enough information to verify the attributes' transferability is another limitation. Uncertainty about the Bishop Arts District being a good representative of commercial revitalization is another issue. The investigation may yield findings unique to its history and context. Future research may require the study of more regional neighborhood commercial revitalization projects to determine if the same attributes contribute to identity.

### 1.8 Summary

This purpose of this research is to investigate the design attributes that contribute to the identity of a revitalized neighborhood commercial district. The site selected for this research is the Bishop Arts District in Dallas, Texas. The goal is to determine which design attributes contribute to district identity most and if they reflect the history and character of this area. The data from interviews with a real estate professional, small business owners and visitors also reveal how the design attributes factored into their decisions to do business in or patronize the district.

The Bishop Arts District was chosen for this research for two reasons. The district is located in Dallas, which allows the researcher to have convenient access to the site for the onsite observations needed to gain more details for this project. More important is that the Bishop Arts District is representative of a neighborhood commercial revitalization project in Dallas and is still undergoing development. The preserved pedestrian oriented environment and historical architecture increase the integrity of the study.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief background of neighborhood revitalization and discusses how revitalization has changed from removal programs to preservation-based commercial revitalization. Providing a basic knowledge of neighborhood revitalization types, this section explains the reasons why neighborhood commercial district revitalization became a dominant approach. Neighborhood commercial revitalization, as one strategy of gentrification, is introduced as well as the connection with design attributes.

The first section is about the concepts urban renewal and urban revitalization. The second section covers the definition of design attributes in literature relative to “sense of place”. The following section begins with the introduction of the research area. Then it discusses the history of the Bishop Arts District’s early development in architecture, entertainment, and transportation, followed by its decline and revitalization.

#### 2.2 Identity in Place

Identity is a characteristic combining uniqueness, dissonance, and mystery (Goldsteen and Elliott, 1994, p. 4). It is a broad and complex concept. In urban design, it is often used to describe a place’s distinctiveness from others. Identity in urban design is often related to two subjects: 1) physical environment; 2) social identity.

Geographical settings determine the fundamental identifiable level (Goldsteen and Elliott, 1994). For example, a city’s characteristics can be influenced by rivers or mountains and other geographical features. In addition to geographical features, the density and placement of buildings as well as street pattern help to inform people of the identity of the city (Goldsteen and Elliott, 1994). By “changing the key features” or

buildings and their space people could change the imagery of a place (Belanger, Cameron and Mora, 2012, p.45).

Social identity plays an important role in place identity because representations of public and private spaces are formed based on different social and cultural models (Belanger, et. al. 2012). "People's characteristics and experiences influence their perception of the built environment" (Belanger, et. al. 2012, p.49). Users could be important in contributing to the identity of place. The local users may have more of a strong emotion attachment than visitors (Goldstein and Elliott, 1994).

## 2.3 Types of Revitalization

### *2.3.1 Urban Renewal and Urban Revitalization*

Urban renewal and urban revitalization are sometimes confusing terms. They can be differentiated according to the times when they emerged and the goals of different projects, but they are often used interchangeably in response to urban decline issues.

Urban renewal is a program of land redevelopment which is related to replacing or restoring substandard buildings in urban area (Zipp, S., Carriere, M. 2012). It often involves the massive reconstruction of deteriorated areas in a city resulting in new land uses. After the 1960s, urban renewal was developed to respond to social conditions associated with industrial society after many scholars had noticed the failures of earlier approaches. Urban renewal in United States went through stages that conceived it as pure place-oriented strategy to place-based people strategy, which focuses on improving the living area for people (Sutton, 2008).

Urban revitalization emerged as a term in the 1960s to 1970s. It aims at "single or combinations of policy measures that serve different policy objectives such as economic, social and cultural development" (Garcia, C., et al, n.d.). It is considered a process to preserve and restore the physical environment through upgrading the

infrastructure for “sustainable evolution of modern cities” based on people (Garcia, C. et al, n.d.). Urban revitalization in current research includes both demolition and reconstruction. Sun (2010) mentioned that in developer-led revitalization, “valuable architecture complexes nearby suffered demolition to balance the floor area ratio of the whole project” (Sun, 2010, p. 14).

Although urban renewal emerged earlier than urban revitalization, both of them have been used in social-based planning research and projects since 1960s. Hence these two terms in this thesis are not differentiated.

### *2.3.2 Neighborhood Revitalization*

Awareness of neighborhood revitalization grew in the wake of urban revitalization efforts in the 1970's, a reaction to population loss due to urban renewal efforts in the 1950's to 1960's. In the beginning, the goal of urban renewal was to solve the ills of the city by clearing out lower-income areas and housing and replacing it with new uses. “Changing the city's skyline” (Clay, 1979, p3) was the title of one of these programs and resulted in mass housing areas being destroyed, which forced many people to move out of neighborhoods. In the late 1970s, these unsuccessful efforts to improve languishing cities eventually made people become aware that the simplistic removal program in place was “dwarfed by the problems they sought to solve” (Clay, 1979, p1). This type of planning only focused on physical change, and did nothing to take into account demographic change, political decisions, and economics at a planning level. Nor did it seek to restore neighborhood culture and preserve history at the community level (Clay, 1979). For example, in some cities people were interested in the area's environment and its distinctiveness, such as the scale of buildings, the geographic location of the area and the density of the population (Clay, 1979). In these cases they were not interested in removal of entire areas, especially in areas that had strong historical qualities. Therefore,

wholesale removal could not be applied to this type of revitalization. In effect, scholars and politicians started to seek new approaches to revitalization and came to understand that successful urban renewal involves not only replacement, but also creation of an urban living environment that meets people's needs physically and psychologically (Jacobs 1961, Erskine 1986).

Inner-city neighborhood revitalization derived from the desire to return the economic incentives to the city to encourage the middle class to resettle in the center of the city (Clay, 1979). Clay classified gentrification (as bottom to up approach) and upgrading as two types of revitalization activities. He pointed out that both gentrification and upgrading are related to changing or improving physical characteristics. But gentrification receives more attention because it leads to dramatic population and socioeconomic changes. In his interviews to examine the first signs of gentrification, Clay (1979) found that new resident owners, small-scale developers, and the activities of speculators were the most influential groups to contribute to neighborhood gentrification. Compared to these groups, few existing local residents and public organizations were involved in the first activities. A phenomenon reported by other observers was the involvement of homosexuals and design professionals, which means they were the significant powers in the early stages of neighborhood revitalization (Clay, 1979). The revitalization of SoHo in New York City is a good example of gentrification. It was driven by artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Attracted by low rent and large open space, artists moved to SoHo industrial buildings. This began the movement of transforming industrial buildings into residential lofts which was later recognized as an urban renewal strategy to attract middle to upper class population in 1980s (Shkuda, 2010).

Such revitalization has frequently occurred in neighborhoods that have potential values such as history and culture to promote. Those neighborhoods also have physical

characteristics that collectively convey a “sense of place” that may attract tourists and potential residents (Chang, 2011). For example, Rockridge in Oakland, California, which was considered as an abandoned neighborhood, has modern, Victorian, Craftsman and Mediterranean style homes (Roach, “From Blighted to Bling”).

Another example is Roosevelt Row in Phoenix, Arizona. This area has a unique history relative to the establishment of Phoenix, and was driven by artists to become a valued mixed use district (“*Roosevelt Row Arts District*”, *section History*). Therefore, “sense of place” as a comprehensive planning tool and as a measurement is used to inventory “internal and external images” (Ghilardi, 2011, Ambard, 2004) before and after a revitalization project to explore “place attachment and satisfaction” (Ambard, 2004, p.1).

### 2.3.3 *Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization*

Neighborhood commercial revitalization is a strategy to promote neighborhoods by supporting small business and retail activity (Chang, 2011, Sutton, 2010). It has become a popular means of neighborhood renewal, yet it is not simply defined because it is “located at the intersection of three distinct yet overlapping fields: neighborhood revitalization, retail development, and minority entrepreneurship” (Sutton, 2010, p.353). Nevertheless, it garners much attention. Aside from the cultural value they may carry, commercial revitalization projects may generate tax income and create more business opportunities. According to Chang (2011), two perspectives explain the phenomenon:

- 1) To many local residents, neighborhood commercial revitalization is a combination of gentrification and upgrading.
- 2) Invigorating commercial brings a positive image and benefits to the community in terms of the community’s economic development.

Commercial revitalization results in a series of changes in physical settings. This activity generates “social and psychological benefits” which give an impression of

upgrading. Besides increasing the tax base, the design attributes of “sense of place” such as “physical, social and cultural characteristics” are helpful to make the neighborhood competitive and become a tourist destination like the Paseo Nuevo project in Santa Barbara, CA (Davis/Bishop Urban design study, 1997). Meanwhile, the revitalized commercial district with street and small scale retail provides a sense of safety which attracts different classes to move back to the city. “The bedrock attribute of a successful city district is that a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 30).

## 2.4 Design Attributes

Design attributes are a key to understanding neighborhood commercial districts from the perspective of design and identity (Chang, 2011). One source of ideas relative to design attributes is *A Pattern Language* by Christopher Alexander. He states that no pattern (relative to urban development problems and their solutions) was an isolated entity (Alexander, 1977, xiii); *Pattern Language* provided a source of conceptual components of urban design and their connections to each other.

### 2.4.1 Design Attributes of Identity

As discussed, the approach of neighborhood commercial revitalization is different from others because the “sense of place” is emphasized. The neighborhood commercial district is a combination of physical elements that form places in town, and again at a city and region scale (Dobbins, 2009). And “the way people react to spaces is concerned with the experience the elements provided” (Sanches, 2011, p.9). In this research, to seek the design attributes of identity is to study the objects where the “sense of place” is attached, district form and physical elements.

#### 2.4.1.1 District form

The elements that contribute to the image of the city can be classified into five elements, paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. Each element can double as another depending on the different circumstance with which the element is being viewed (Lynch, 1960, p. 18). In case of the Bishop Arts District, buildings, lots, blocks and streets are the four attributes used to define its urban framework (Dobbins, 2009). This means that the framework formed by the block size and street width help to determine the character of places, and give people different experiences (Dobbins, 2009; Jacobs, 1961; Florida, 2002; Sanches, 2011). These attributes form a “hierarchy of the street, section of street and building height” to shape spaces “as well as more tangible features” (Dobbins, 2009, p. 98). For example, short blocks in residential areas allow more small shops to be inserted onto street, allowing the street to become a commercial street (Jacobs, 1961). In this case, the neighborhood and district form are studied, because the form establishes a sequence that shapes how people experience the district, by experiencing the district boundary, the street network of the neighborhood and gathering nodes (Alexander, 1977).

Design Attributes	Buildings	Lots	Blocks	Streets
Framework				
	Formalist	Organic	Modernist	
Shape the Experience Street Section				
	TYP. Strip Commercial Street		TYP. Strip Metropolitan Boulevard	

Figure 2-1 Design attributes definition (Dobbin, 2009)

#### 2.4.1.2 Physical elements

Design attributes are designed to improve the existing built environment to benefit residents and to promote microeconomic benefits for local communities (Alexander, 1977). These types of design attributes for neighborhood commercial districts are not only visible objects, but are also objects given meaning based on stakeholders' subjective experiences (Dobbin 2009, Sutton, 2010, Lynch, 1960).

The design attributes are often interpreted as visual and sensual physical elements that create an environment which “encompasses the idea that humans form close relationships with the spaces in which they live” (Egoz et al.,2006, p.59). These attributes may include “public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces,

parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials”. (The Main Street Four-Point Approach, section design).

A place’s value lies largely in how it is experienced by people. For example, long-time residents have a different sense of place and a more enhanced emotional connection than newer residents (Ambard, 2004, p. 15). Likewise business owners may be more sensitive to architecture facades. Therefore, having an understanding of the stakeholder’ interests is important and helpful in identifying meaningful attributes of the revitalized neighborhood commercial district.

But it is noted that design attributes in neighborhood commercial revitalization projects are varied because of the conditions and level of revitalization, as well as investment funds (Clay, 1979). Although they reflect the conditions of the houses, wealth of the investors and the interests and tastes of business owners (Clay, 1979, Sutton, 2010), design attributes should be defined by the interests of merchants and visitors, not by “what gets produced” for economic efforts and “physical symbols of viability” only, such as job creation, tax revenue or corridor beautification (Sutton, 2010).

## 2.5 Oak Cliff

Oak Cliff is the community where the Bishop Arts District is located. The history of Oak Cliff and its revitalization before the introduction of the Bishop Arts District is discussed in this section.

Before Oak Cliff was granted its official name, the community started with a farming settlement by William S Beaty and the Leonard and Coombes families in 1837. In 1882, this area was provided a transportation development opportunity by taking advantage of a railway station of the Cleburne and Rio Grande Railroad. Five years later, two developers, Thomas L. Marsalis and John S. Armstrong, purchased several hundred acres for residential development. Oak Cliff received its name from the residential

development's advertisement. With much effort, Oak Cliff was established as a city in 1890 and flourished until the financial depression of 1893. Although annexation to City of Dallas was carried out in 1903, Oak Cliff still maintained a unique identity because of the separation by the Trinity River (Elliott, A. et al. 2009).

In the 1960s, the civil rights movement affected Oak Cliff. The opening of neighborhoods to all races resulted in a neighborhood of diverse racial makeup. Some neighborhoods are now primarily African American, Hispanic, or Anglo; and others are blended. Housing prices dropped because of the changing demographics. However, Oak Cliff's nice treed neighborhoods with short commutes to downtown Dallas were attractive to "urban pioneers". The investments from them contributed to the North Oak Cliff business growth and restoration of old buildings (Elliott, A. et al. 2009).

A revival in Oak Cliff occurred in 1970s led by the Old Oak Cliff Conservation League and Dallas city councilman Dr. Charles Tandy. As part of it, commercial neighborhood revitalization in the Bishop Arts District in 1980s, led by developer Jim Lake, attracted more people to Oak Cliff (Elliott, A. et al. 2009).

## 2.6 Bishop Arts District

### *2.6.1 Introduction*

The Bishop Arts District is a small retail area but a leading neighborhood commercial revitalization district. It is located in North Oak Cliff close to downtown Dallas and provides entertainment and dining for residents from surrounding neighborhoods, for locals from across the city and for tourists. Like other warehouse-based projects in the United States, the original warehouses and shops were transformed into a popular tourism spot in Dallas starting with galleries. The adaptive reuse and revitalization concept of "looking back, moving forward" (Crockett, 2006, p.48) not only brings preservation to the neighborhood, but also helps to identify the place as a landmark in

Dallas. This revitalization was inspired by a profound local history, which is introduced in the following section.

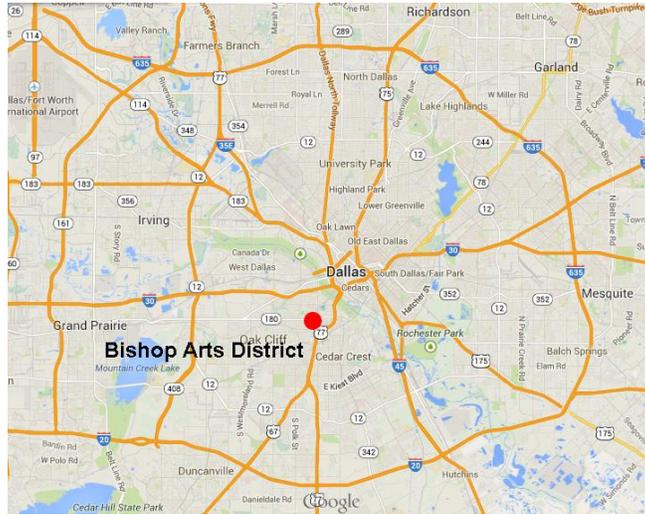


Figure 2-2 Bishop Arts District in Dallas (Google Map)



Figure 2-3 Bishop Arts District revitalized area (Google Map)

## 2.6.2 *Evolution of the District*

### 2.6.2.1 Beginnings and improvement

In 1903, a streetcar service was initiated to serve workers who had jobs in downtown Dallas and lived in the residential community where the Bishop Arts District is located now. Annexation of the area to the city of Dallas was carried out on March 7<sup>th</sup> that a same year. Another critical event influencing the newly annexed district is that identical street names had to be changed. Therefore Monroe Avenue and Cleveland Drive combined to become Bishop Street. Later two street loops named “North Loop” and “South Loop” were constructed for commuting to downtown Dallas in August 1903, establishing the initial boundary of the Bishop Arts District (Crocket, 2006).

### 2.6.2.2 Architecture in the district

The Bishop Arts District developed as a mixed-use community over time. Residential buildings along Bishop Avenue and some parallel streets to the west were built in the Victorian style. At the same time, the first commercial buildings opened including a grocery, drug store and barber shop at Bishop Avenue and Seventh Street. Later on, more blocks were built on the east side of Bishop and West Seventh which became identified with the neighborhood now known as Bishop Arts District (Crocket, 2006,).



Figure 2-4 Apartment building in 1904 (The Bishop Arts District: A Brief History,2006)

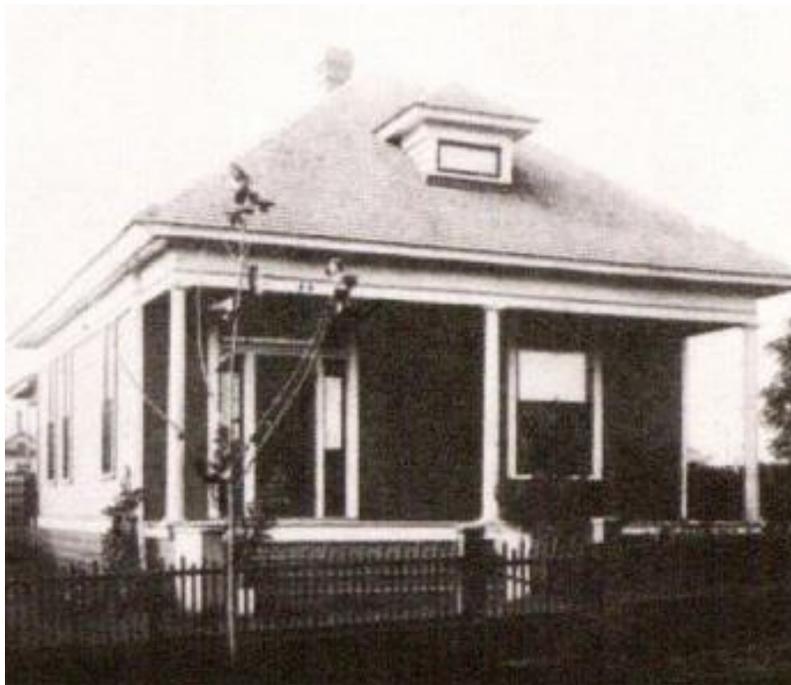


Figure 2-5 Typical house in 1904 (Family collection of John Apperson, the Bishop Arts District: A Brief History, 2006)

### 2.6.2.3 Entertainment in the district

As population grew, entertainment facilities became one of the services desired in the neighborhood. The first movie theater came to the district on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1919. It was improved with a stage by Foy in 1921. The movie theater was active until it closed in 1950 as TV and updated movie houses replaced the old techniques (Crocket, 2006).

### 2.6.2.4 Transportation and street development

Several gas stations and car repair shops were added to service the district, and important street improvements contributed to the neighborhood's street network and circulation. Bishop Avenue between Seventh Street and Jefferson Street, seen as the "most important cross street in central Oak Cliff" at that time (cited by Crocket, 2006) was graded in 1912 to link North Loop and South Loop for cars. The 20 miles of paving construction continued for 10 years. In 1945, public transportation began replacing old streetcars (Crocket, 2006).

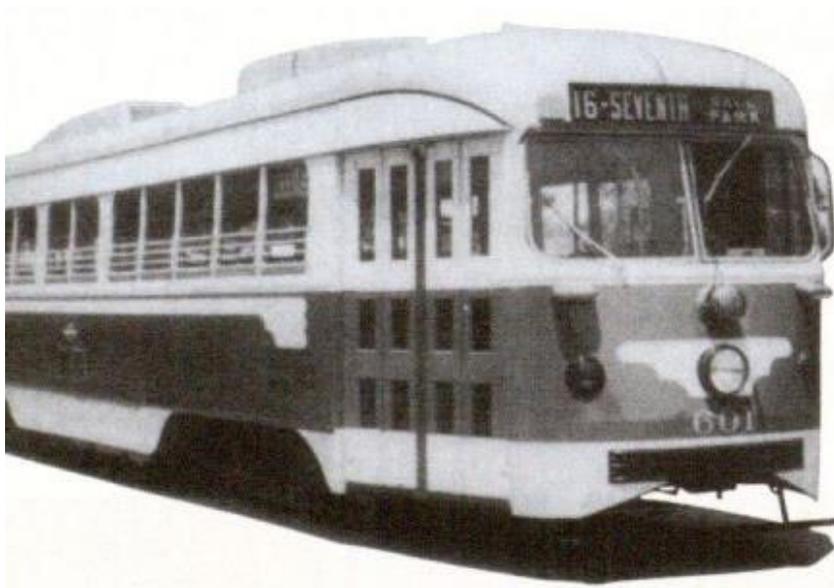


Figure 2-6 Electric trolley coach in 1945 (Bishop Arts District Merchants Association, the Bishop Arts District: A Brief History, 2006)

#### 2.6.2.5 District decline and fall

Then the district went through decline between the mid-1960's and the mid-1980's. Like many other commercial districts at the same time, one of the main reasons for decline was the opening of shopping malls in the suburbs which competed with discounts and entertainment facilities. They forced many small business owners to close their business. The car repair shops were also impacted by larger competitors. They were soon closed or relocated for the same reason. Since cars and buses were more affordable and convenient for commuting, trolley stops like Bishop Avenue and Seventh Street were removed.

Other reasons help account for the decline as well. For instance, aging commercial buildings were not repaired because business owners left the district. Families' newer generations relocated to the suburbs, resulting in dramatic demographics changes. And eventually crime spread into the district during the 1980s.



Figure 2-7 Decline in the Bishop Arts District in 1985 (Jim Lake Companies, the Bishop Arts District: A Brief History, 2006)

#### 2.6.2.6 Revitalization

Developer Jim Lake saw an investment opportunity in the Bishop Arts District and began buying up some storefronts in 1984. During the decade, he set up one year rent-free and provided space for police to attract new merchants. The revitalization of the

Bishop Arts District began with two city blocks being transformed into a pedestrian neighborhood environment. This was followed by more businesses coming in, and the revitalization continued with more physical changes. It has received attention from the public and state governors since 1990s (Crocket, 2006).



Figure 2-8 Restored mixed-use apartment by Good Space, Inc. (The Bishop Arts District: A Brief History, 2006).

## 2.7 Summary

The literature review introduces the definitions of urban renewal and urban revitalization. These are two terms that could be differentiated slightly, but for the purpose of this thesis can be used interchangeably. The next section briefly introduces the history of neighborhood revitalization in the United States as well as revitalization types. Commercial revitalization as combination of gentrification and upgrading is introduced. The new residents from different races and professionals, who were attracted by low rent and special architecture, became catalysts for neighborhood revitalization efforts.

The next section talks about how the researcher defined design attributes in revitalized commercial districts. Christopher Alexander's urban design theory is consulted to provide clearer categories for the design attributes study. The last section provides the history of the research area as well as approaches used to revitalize the neighborhood commercial district. The following chapter gives detailed research methods used to study the Bishop Arts District.

## Chapter 3

### Research Methods

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology for studying the design attributes of the Bishop Arts District that contribute to identity in the revitalized neighborhood commercial district. The goal is to find what preserved and created design attributes in the Bishop Arts District reinforce the identity and increase the area's appeal. Through the perceptions from real estate professionals, business owners and visitors, this study examines and provides an understanding of what design attributes contribute to neighborhood commercial revitalization in Dallas.

#### 3.2 Research Design

This research employs a case study strategy to obtain data. According to Deming and Swaffield (2011), case study strategy is a "complex multifaceted investigation into a particular place" to help "achieve explanatory value" (2011, p.80). It is used to "narrow and focus the investigation" (Deming and Swaffield, 2011, P.79) and to give readers a better understanding of the issues. Because this study is about design attributes, which involves an inventory of the place and stakeholders' individual perceptions, it is necessary for this study to employ the case study strategy to collect different data for a full scale analysis. Therefore, the district is to be evaluated by observation, interviews and secondary documents, which are three main data sources for the case study strategy in landscape architectural site research. The research procedure is as follows:

- Examine secondary documents to provide insight into the district background
- Study context maps for the district location and its context within the surrounding area

- Observe on-site and record design attributes of the revitalized commercial district through photos
- Conduct interviews with developers, business owners and visitors and record the interviews
- Collect and compare the data from observation and interviews
- Analyze data and develop themes

### 3.3 Data Collection Method

#### *3.3.1 On-site Field Observation*

This research studies the identity of a place. The categories of design attributes adapted from a range of precedent research provide a foundation for inventory in the field. Two issues require consideration during field observation. First, the categories of design attributes are varied because of other conditions such as history, culture and scale. Second, understanding design attributes and estimating how they contribute to “sense of place” are based on personal experience in some way. Observation in the field not only avoids repeating findings mechanically rooted in other guidelines but also provides richer, cleaner first- hand data of characteristics.

Field observation employs photos and notes. Photos are primarily taken at street level to capture the tangible elements that can be seen by people in the district. Yet, the elements in the photos could be read as isolated attributes, becoming more object-orientated to readers.

#### *3.3.2 Open-ended Interviews*

Interviews are utilized to provide insights and to answer questions that cannot be solved by direct observation (Deming and Swaffield,2011 p. 72). One of the research goals of the study is to find out how current users, including visitors, respond to the design attributes which reinforce identity. Therefore, interviews are a critical method in

order to learn and understand the importance of the design attributes from the viewpoint of professional insight in accordance with interviewees' experience.

### 3.3.2.1 Selecting the interviewees

Primarily, this research focuses on different users' perception of design attributes which contribute to the identity of the revitalized neighborhood commercial district. Thus, the users directly related to the Bishop Arts District are defined as:

- Real estate professionals, who envision, actively develop and/or manage districts and neighborhoods;
- Business owners, who invested in and manage small businesses in the Bishop Arts District;
- Visitors from residences, surrounding neighborhoods and beyond who are patrons of Bishop Arts District.

Business owners and visitors are chosen in a random sampling from different retail and specialty businesses to allow the researcher to obtain a diversity of insights and individual experience. The additional interviewee recruiting technique used for this research is snowball sampling, which is a sampling technique used to recruit future participants based on existing participants' referrals (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). An advantage of snowball sampling is that it allows the researcher to find participants who are local residents or have known the Bishop Arts District very well in order to receive more accurate information. Interviewees are triangulated to “develop an in-depth understanding typical of participant observation while grasping the broader picture by studying different people within the same settings” (Douglas, 1976, as cited in Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 81).

To make sure the data are collected accurately, all the conversations are recorded digitally by iPhone with interviewees' permission during the interview. The

participants are anonymous and the interview contents will be destroyed after the conversation is transcribed as documents.

### 3.3.2.2 Interview questions

Interview questions are submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at the University of Texas at Arlington. An introduction of the research is enclosed with interview questions in appendix B. The following interview questions were developed in order to examine how design attributes contribute to a specific revitalized commercial district and to understand users' perceptions of the design attributes.

- How would you describe the Bishop Arts District?
- Do you think the design attributes reflect the history of Bishop Arts District?
- What design attributes do you think contribute to the identity of the Bishop Arts District?
- What design attributes are most appealing to you? Architecture? Materials? Symbols?
- What is your level of satisfaction with the experience in Bishop Arts District?
- How would you change it if you could?

## 3.4 Data Analysis Methods

Data are analyzed after onsite observations and interviews are conducted. The observation data are collected according to the adapted form that was discussed in the literature review. The data are then analyzed in order to identify what physical design attributes contribute to the Bishop Arts District's identity. Interview data are analyzed using grounded theory (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998) method based on interviewees' insights. Data from observation and interviews are then compared in order to define and

refine the themes. The researcher then “explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent theory” (Taylor and Bogda, 1998, p. 137).

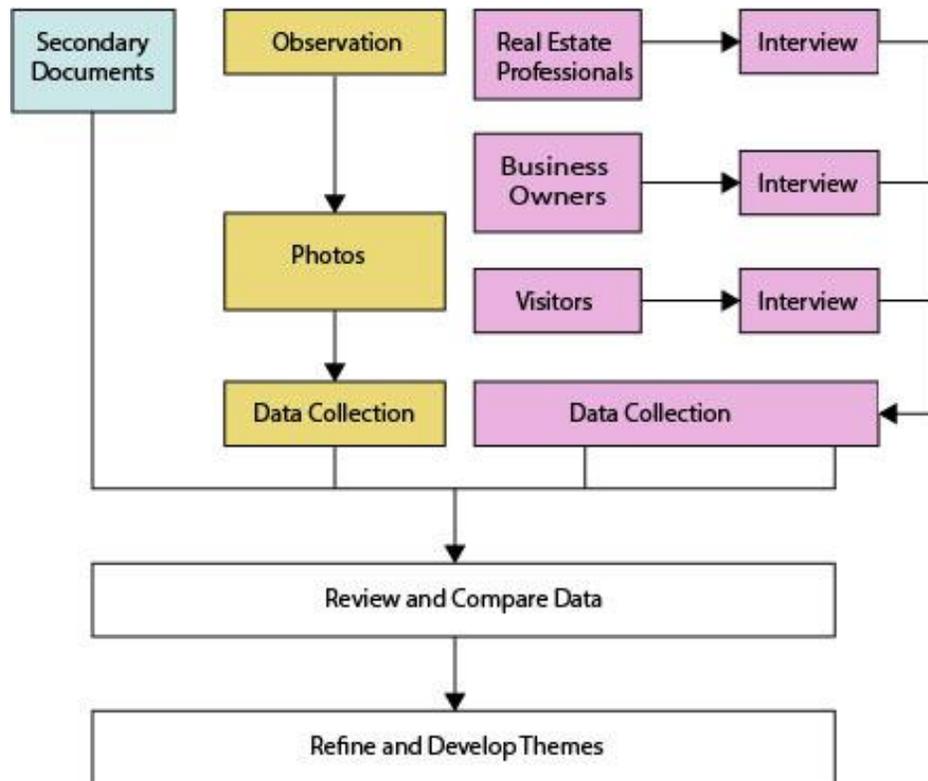


Figure 3-1 Analysis and evaluation process

### 3.5 Methodological and Limitations

There are limitations to the methodology adopted for this research. It is difficult to determine the numbers of people needed for the qualitative interview process. A broad range of people would be required to develop a list of comprehensive insights (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998).

Other limitations are associated with the case study method. The Bishop Arts District attracts a lot of attention from media outlets but not lot of attention has been given from the landscape architectural perspective. Few existing studies have been published.

And the few existing overviews of the district from websites do not provide complete and accurate information.

### 3.6 Summary

The purpose of this research is to identify design attributes of identity and to learn how they contribute to revitalized neighborhood commercial districts based on perceptions of different interviewees. The research utilizes the case study method as research strategy which includes observation, interviews and review of other supporting documents.

Studying the secondary documentation of Bishop Arts is the first step. Following that, observation on location is used to give the researcher an understanding of the district, especially its design attributes. Next, interviews are used as a critical qualitative method to capture data from conversations. The interviews are scheduled by phone call or email. Open-ended interview questions were developed in order to receive more information based on the respondents' personal experience.

Data from observation are developed separately from interviews. The data from interviews with three types of stakeholders are read individually, compared and analyzed. The following chapter describes the process of data analysis and the findings.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis and Findings

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the design attributes found from on-site observation, interview analysis, and the resulting themes and findings based on the perceptions of participants in the Bishop Arts District. The on-site observations help clarify and confirm the interview results relative to design attributes in this revitalized commercial district. In the research, thirteen participants were recruited, including seven visitors, five business owners and one real estate professional. Their thoughts on key attributes are compared and summarized in terms of the background of those participants. Then, the interview analysis evaluates the design attributes and other key components based on the answers to interview questions. This part reveals the character of the Bishop Arts District and what might be expected to contribute to the identity of other revitalized commercial districts. Finally, the four themes are developed. These four themes focus on the components which require cooperation among community, public administration and design. These data could be considered and applied in future projects.

#### 4.2 Observation in the Field

On-site observation provides firsthand evidence and inventories of the site for the researcher to build theories upon and allows for the acute study of objects (Deming and Swaffield, 2011). The purpose of this observation in the Bishop Arts District is to categorize the design attributes in, and to provide deeper insights into the identity of the district. Beginning with the on-site observation process allows the researcher to gain an understanding of context and of the specific qualities of the revitalization district before conducting the interviews. The following narrative discusses design attributes in:

- Street pattern

- Sidewalks
- Buildings and storefronts
- Parking areas
- Street furniture and public art

#### 4.2.1 Street Pattern



Figure 4-1 Site map context (Google Maps)

The map in figure 4-1 shows the study area where the site observations were conducted. It is comprised of three East-West streets and two North-South streets. West Davis Street functions as collector road, which collects traffic from the surrounding street network and provides access to the district for vehicles. West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, West 8<sup>th</sup> Street and North

Bishop Avenue serve as local streets where sidewalks are located. From observation, most of the small retail businesses are concentrated on those local streets. The study area of the Bishop Arts District includes four blocks within West Davis Street, North Madison Avenue, West Eight Street, North Adams Avenue and North Bishop Avenue. The street patterns provide the Bishop Arts District an ideal condition to develop an identifiable retail boundary.

The block size in the Bishop Arts District is about 560 feet by 300 feet and 560 feet by 180 feet. The short sides of these blocks are along North Bishop Avenue, which contributes to its walkability. The longer blocks on West Davis Street (Figure 4-2) encourage vehicles to travel at high speeds. It is not a pedestrian friendly street because of its high vehicular use and vehicle speeds. The few crosswalks and long wait times at traffic lights also present inconvenience to the pedestrian traveling along West Davis Street. However, Davis is a street where retail is located and developed as an edge of the Bishop Arts District and therefore needs to be accounted for in this study.

The street width from building face to building face on North Bishop Avenue is about 60 feet, and the average height of the buildings facing the street is about 30 feet. This condition helps to create a 2: 1 street width to building height ratio, which is a “desirable ratio of height to width for good street spatial definition” (Hedman, R, and Jaszewski, A., 1984, p. 59).



Figure 4-2 Davis Street with its busy traffic becomes the boundary separating vehicle-dominated area and walkable area.

North Bishop Avenue, the heart of the most intensive and popular retail concentration in the Bishop Arts District, is interrupted and offset by West Davis Street creating two T junctions (Figure 4-3). This condition restricts vehicular access into the district from the north, and presents an opportunity to set up a gateway. The existing gateway plaza, however, was not well designed to function as a visual gateway and is not highly visible. The district sign for the Bishop Arts District, which is painted on a building on W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, is noticeable because it is perpendicular to N. Bishop Avenue. Since there is no vehicle access to the district provided at the unseen gateway, turning right onto Davis Street, and then left onto the continuation of N. Bishop Avenue, where the

small retail strip starts, becomes the entrance of the Bishop Arts District for pedestrians and vehicles.

The majority of small restaurants and boutiques are concentrated on North Bishop Avenue and Seven Street, and also on Davis Street and Eight Street. Also included in the street pattern is an alley between the residential houses on West Seventh Street and West Eight Street. It is not noticeable even though murals are placed at the entrances as public art. Occasionally, pedestrians were attracted by the murals and would take pictures. Most times pedestrian were passing through the alley without stopping. This could be because, in addition to there being no retail developed along the alley, the insecurity of unknown conditions pushes people to walk away from them.



Figure 4-3 Two T junctions of North Bishop Avenue and West Davis Street form the edge, gateway and entrance of the Bishop Arts District.

#### *4.2.2 Sidewalks*

The sidewalks in the Bishop Arts District serve multiple functions for the pedestrian user. Davis Street is not a pedestrian friendly environment due to how it's been developed with long blocks, the volume and speed of vehicles that travel along it, a lack of predictable sidewalks and spread out intersections. However, small blocks along North Bishop Avenue create a sense of walkability due to the short distances and multiple intersections for pedestrians that slow the traffic down. Pedestrians are observed enjoying walking on the North Bishop Avenue sidewalks more than those on West Davis Street. This is in part due to the regularity of sidewalks and how they are used along this street. Compared to the 9 foot sidewalk on North Bishop Avenue, the narrower and variable width of the sidewalk on West Davis Street is not suitable to provide ideal walkable conditions. However, several small stores and restaurants still locate on Davis Street because of the on-street parking.

Restaurants along the North Bishop Avenue place alfresco dining at the sidewalk to create an outdoor character which is different from most of Dallas. Sidewalks fully occupied by alfresco dining are also found on Seventh Street. Those spaces occur mostly where restaurants are located on the street corner and face south. Since outdoor space is limited in the Bishop Arts District, these restaurants have maximized the outdoor space on the sidewalk and side yard.



Figure 4-4 North Bishop Avenue street section



Figure 4-5 Alfresco dining enriches the street life in the Bishop Arts District.



Figure 4-6 A small outdoor space created by awning.

#### *4.2.3 Buildings and Storefronts*

Located in proximity to residential houses, the buildings in the Bishop Arts District have strong historical and eclectic features that help differentiate this district from others. Overall, the buildings are maintained with integrity and give a historic feeling of the original time when they were built. Most exterior materials, such as bricks, are preserved in good condition. The proportions of the windows are kept as originally designed to maximize the transparency of the stores for viewing from the sidewalk. Some stores replaced the windows with unfixed windows. These devices allow the restaurants and bars to have an opening to the street and serve the pedestrian in as open a manner as possible.



Figure 4-7 A historic building is reused as restaurants. The texture and colors of the building are maintained well.



Figure 4-8 Restaurant engages people with windows that open to the outside dining area.

Although the materials on the buildings are historical, the individually owned stores give those buildings strong personalities that reflect the business owner's personal tastes. Influenced by history and Hispanic culture, bright and contrasting colors (Figure 4-11) are used very often for these commercial buildings. Most structural features of the buildings are preserved. The interior styles of these buildings also vary depending on design and investment funding. Some elements, such as floors and ceilings, still have qualities and materials recognized as historic or vintage.

Influenced by the adjacent retail businesses and rising rents, residential houses have been redeveloped for commercial use (Figure 4-10). For example, Cozy Cottage children's boutique and Emporium Pies were typical houses with a porch in this district. Their exteriors were repaired but they still maintain their distinctive features and residential character. There are no strong signs or large commercial window displays to influence the customers.



Figure 4-9 An example of a commercial building



Figure 4-10 An example of retail in residential house



Figure 4-11 Bright colors are often used in decoration to brighten facades

#### 4.2.4 Parking Areas

The Bishop Arts District includes on-street parking on North Bishop Avenue, small parking lots, and shared on-street parking in some residential blocks for residents and visitors. The multiple parking options are employed to alleviate the parking shortage and maximize the use ratio for a large stream of visitors.

Overall, the amount of current available parking presents problems balancing parking needs between lower weekday needs and higher parking demand on weekends. Because the numbers of parking spaces are insufficient or inconvenient for visitors, a lot of visitors choose on-street parking on the other neighborhood streets. Meanwhile parking lots are damaging to the historic character of the district. The Bishop Arts District was designed for the pedestrian. Current parking lots have occupied the open space and vacant space which was designed for pedestrian use and activities.



Figure 4-12 It is hard to find parking spaces during the weekends.

#### *4.2.5 Street Furniture and Public Art*

The District's street furniture includes benches, streetlights, bins, flower boxes and other facilities that are maintained and designed to evoke the history and artistic flavor of the neighborhood. The street lights are new and designed as Acorn style, which was a style for traditional cast iron streetlights often seen in historic districts. Building lights can be found both in their original design and in contemporary designs. Both street lights and building lights are placed in a repetitive fashion which contributes to the industrial character and visual interest of the district.

The benches can be categorized as publicly owned and privately owned. The public benches are new and commercially made in a style that recalls historical bench designs. They are placed in the open spaces. For example, only two public benches are found on Seventh Street. The other publicly owned benches are found in spaces which do not provide opportunities for watching the street view. Privately owned benches are more delicate and have a strong visual connection to the storefront design they are placed in front of. The eclectic and hand-made designs of those benches offset the weakness of the commercial public benches. They are usually placed in front of stores and designed with similar colors and styles. Since they are not uniform, it is more attractive to the pedestrian and speaks to the various styles in the district which link to a sense of artistic individuality.

Murals in the Bishop Arts District are also linked to the history of the district. As a primary public art form, murals have been employed as retail advertisements which are a combination of art and commercial. Those murals as well as other art forms are highly valued by interviewees as attributes to individualize the store, enrich the visual environment and link to the history of neighborhood.



Figure 4-13 Street light and building lights in the Bishop Arts District

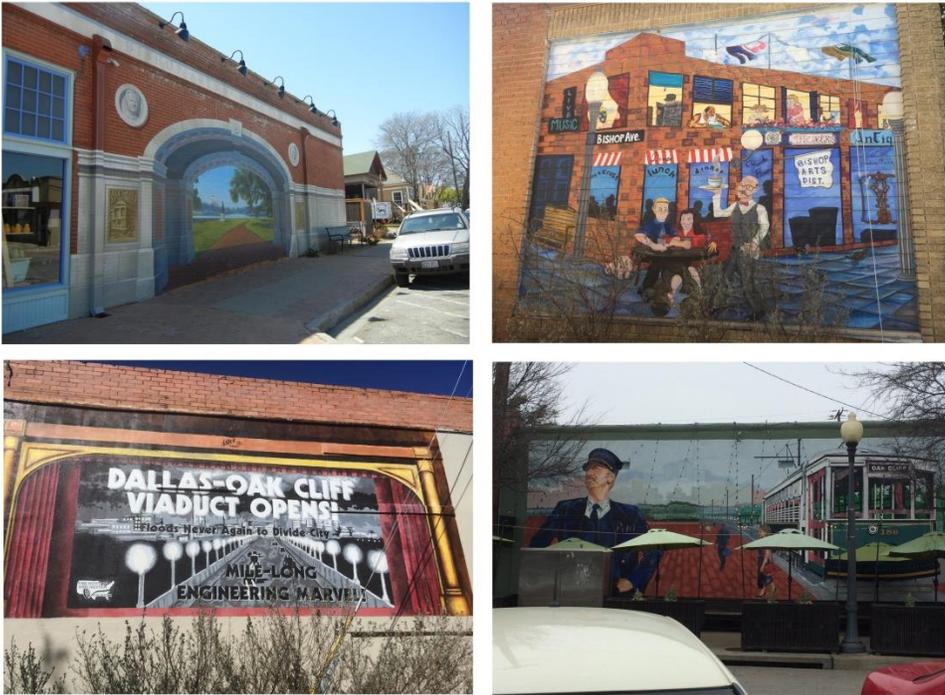


Figure 4-14 Murals in the Bishop Arts District reflect the history of the neighborhood.



Figure 4-15 Restaurants and bars develop mural advertisements. They are a recognized characteristic of the Bishop Arts District.



Figure 4-16 Street furniture uses color as an artistic theme to decorate the environment.



Figure 4-17 Interesting pavement details are found on the sidewalk. Sidewalk with recycled brick paving (top); Footprint with different types of coins; House number on the sidewalk is designed with brick (bottom).



Figure 4-18 Store signs are in different forms, materials and colors. They are the first elements to provide pedestrian direction and information of the stores. As part of the arts in the Bishop Art District, they are a symbol of the district's creativity.

### 4.3 Interview Analysis

The interviews with the participants were transcribed into text and summarized in a spreadsheet (Appendix B) in accordance with the interview questions. This method helps clarify the data and facilitates the use of the triangulation method to compare the data from three categories. This is also helpful to create a list of key words from the interview data to develop themes for this research.

To give a clear understanding of the interview data from different groups, the profiles of the participants in this research are introduced below. The interview data could be analyzed to reveal three broad aspects relative to attributes of identity in the Bishop Arts District based on the interview questions. The broad aspects are impressions of the revitalized commercial district, the design attributes of identity and possible improvements.

#### *4.3.1 Participants' Profiles*

As discussed in Chapter Three, to understand perceptions of attributes of identity deeply and clearly, the interview participants were selected in terms of three groups. Visitors and stakeholders such as business owners were selected randomly in person in the Bishop Arts District. Others, including real estate professionals, were contacted by email, phone calls or in person and invited to set up interviews. But only one real estate professional accepted the invitation in this research. The snowball sampling technique was added to recruit other participants recommended by the previous interviewees. This technique allowed the researcher to find participants who were knowledgeable about the Bishop Arts District and who could provide deeper insights.

The time of day for recruitment was taken into consideration because the targeted participants' business activities in the Bishop Arts District are varied. Interviews with visitors were set up on the weekend to allow for a random sampling approach. The

schedule for business owners was set up on the workdays. A total of fourteen participants were interviewed for this research. Seven people were selected as visitors, including a local resident, a student, an artist, an insurance specialist, a landscape architect and others. Four business owners and one employer were grouped as business owners, and one real estate professional was recruited.

Most participants have some impression on Bishop Arts District in terms of the location they are from or the length of time they have run their business. Two of the visitors to the district were not familiar with the term, "Bishop Arts District," but they were still able to provide their perceptions based on their experience in the district. Thirteen people had been interviewed by the time the researcher realized that interview responses started to repeat.

#### *4.3.2 Impressions of the Revitalized Commercial District*

The impressions of the revitalized neighborhood commercial district are based on the participants' response to interview question one, "How would you describe the Bishop Arts District?" This question is intended to help the researcher understand overall impressions of the revitalized neighborhood commercial district and its key characteristics from participants.

Most of the participants describe the Bishop Arts District as a small, revitalized commercial district within Dallas. They mentioned the cycle of commercial revitalization, including starting with an area in decline, maintaining historical features, creating a pedestrian friendly environment, and developing small distinctive retail. Participant (V-1) indicated that, "Bishop Arts is an old commercial part of town and it's a part of Dallas that languished for a while and was not upgraded, was not replaced and therefore it's kind of as it was." Participant (B-10) talked about her interests in the district and why she chose the location to develop her business. She explained "The Oak Cliff community is still

considered an up-and-coming--sort of high crime, high homeless population--so it's still kind of developing area." The real estate professional thought it is a very unique area, although it was her first time to visit it. "Honestly it's my first time visiting here and I'm just having a great experience. Everything in this little street really caught my eye like, every single unique store... and all those good restaurants and bars."

In the interviews, participants mentioned other characteristics in the Bishop Arts District which may not be transferable to other revitalization projects, such as "a sense of community", "relaxed feeling", "mixed" and "individualization". Participant (V-3) thought the district is "an eclectic neighborhood" and "there is lot diversity in highly Hispanic neighborhood... (it is) mixed." She said "the district is eclectic...it's 'neighborhoody' and you feel like it's laid back." Comparing Bishop Arts to other districts, she thought "mixed" and "diversity" differentiates the district from others:

You have people who probably are very white, very hetero and next can be very gay or maybe they have all tattoos. So there's a mix... We like the mix because we travel a lot so it's like we really appreciate when there's other cultures around.

Participant (V-4) who was originally from Mexico appreciated the relaxed feeling the district gave. Because of the diversity and personalities, she felt the people in this district are "more relaxed and (have) no pretensions". Participant (V-6) mentioned he liked the Bishop Art District because of the "diversity of the businesses there." He thought this diversity was one component contributing to the success of the commercial revitalization.

From business owners' perspectives, six participants described the Bishop Arts District as having a sense of community. Participant (B-11) thought "there is a sense of community and there is sense of it needing some help." But he also pointed out that the buildings in the district are as unique as the culture of district, which supports diversity and individualization. This is one reason they located the store in this district. One business owner (B-8) mentioned that the Bishop Arts District is an artistic place which

allows “a lot of personalities” and “a lot of different mindsets.” He explained that the individual entrepreneurs can be differentiated by the different styles and designs. The district was not like uniform stores in a shopping mall. It encourages “keeping all the individuals and all different types of process in here (that is) kind of keeping a warm feeling versus an industrial feeling.”

#### *4.3.3 The Design Attributes of Identity*

##### *4.3.3.1 History*

An historic and old feeling was mentioned as a primary characteristic of the Bishop Arts District in the interviews. The interview question was set to study what design attributes reflect the history of the district in terms of participants experience. Design attributes such as brick were prominently mentioned as being reflective of the history of the district by seven participants. Participant (V-1) thought the brick is the material which most contributes to a historic feeling. Participant (V-2) mentioned he didn't know the history well. But he pointed out the brick buildings “don't look very modern or new”. It could be determined from the materials that “they weren't built recently.” Another participant (V-6) said “the main appeal is that it did feel like old Dallas.” The idea that the brick buildings were part of the district's history was mentioned by the business owners. Participant (B-9), who was an original resident in Bishop Arts District, thought the external look of the buildings had been not upgraded or changed since the 1960s. Participant (B-11) specifically pointed out the building his store is located in was built in 1920, which directly reflects the history of this district.

However, some participants hold different perspectives on whether or not the design attributes reflect the history of the district. Participant (V-4) described the design attributes as “art decoration,” which were original designs that contribute to the current character of the district. Hence they reflect the personalities and culture, rather than the

history of the district. Participant (B-10) pointed out the way to reflect history would be to maintain the service businesses in the buildings where they used to be.

#### 4.3.3.2 Small shops

Other design attributes in the Bishop Arts District were easily identified by the participants. Small shops, historic buildings, walking streets and public arts were primary attributes of identity cited by participants.

As determined from on-site observation of the street network, small blocks with short distances between intersections created positive access for pedestrians and benefited the small retail businesses. Participant (V-1) specified that small shops and pedestrian accessibility contribute to the district's identity most. What was attractive to him was the energy created by those two attributes, which give people an opportunity for "walking around and having a good time." Small shops were also mentioned by participant (V-2). He explained "the shops are very compact, which is usually not seen very much."

#### 4.3.3.3 Buildings

Buildings were cited as important to the district's character by many participants. The materials, colors and interior conditions were mentioned as parts of buildings that contribute to identity. Participant (V-7) said, "I think so (the design attributes contribute to identity); they treat their buildings like the way they are..." In addition, the scale of the buildings as discussed in the on-site observations was a critical element to form space. Participant (V-5) states, "it's more about the scale of buildings...than whether or not there is a bench or a trash that can (be) appropriately placed or the color of brick... space and types of blocks reflect "historically what that space has been."

Storefronts were mentioned as a transition element between the buildings and the street. Participant (V-6) thought that the storefronts were a source of pleasing district

character, saying, “Storefronts help (identity)...you park in one area, you walk around. Being able to see into the business, street signage, everything with the storefront... just a really nice character.”

#### 4.3.3.4 Streets

Unlike most of Dallas, which is designed for vehicles, the Bishop Arts District was originally designed for the people who worked in Dallas (Crocket, 2006). The streets and sidewalks provided the pedestrian the access to enjoy and experience the stores. Therefore, pedestrian friendly streets, including size of street and outdoor space for activities were another design attribute mentioned by the participants for history and identity. Participant (V-3) described the neighborhood vibe she felt was provided by the streets with mature street trees. Streets were associated with pedestrian life. As Jane Jacob’s said, “streets bring together people who do not know each other in an intimate, private, social fashion...” Participant (V-3) specifically pointed out that the streets in the district contribute to the sense of community. She said, “You run into people all the time...you’ll never know when you’re going to run into somebody that you know”. She suggested that lighting needed to be added because the lights enrich the visual environment, encourage night activities and function as retail advertisement.

#### 4.3.3.5 Public art

Public art individualizes the place and makes it less anonymous (Sucher, 1995, p.158). Public art in the district includes murals, pavement art, hand-made street furniture and street signs, and unique, individualized store designs. Although most interviewed participants did not specify pavement, street signs or street furniture as design attributes which contribute to identity, murals and store designs were described as “cool design” that contribute to the Bishop Arts District identity. Participant (V-2) indicated that a furniture store on the North Bishop Avenue with a cool design usually couldn’t be found in

other places around Dallas. He also mentioned the artwork such as murals were cool attributes that contribute to identity and a cool artsy feeling. Participant (B-7) mentioned “many design pieces” were attractive to the pedestrians and “you want to just stop and look at them.” Participant (R-13) described the details, color and logo design of the stores that catch people’s eyes as contributing to an arts-inspired identity. She also mentioned that store design was another visual medium to develop business, “I walk on the street...I really want to walk every corner of the road because I just want to see the uniqueness of every single store.”

#### *4.3.4 Suggested Improvements*

While physical and visual attributes were highlighted as contributing to identity, most participants tended to agree that the atmosphere is the most appealing aspect of the district. Several primary improvement aspects were provided by the participants, although all of them gave high scores when evaluating the Bishop Arts District revitalization.

##### *4.3.4.1 Parking*

Six participants had concerns that there were not enough parking spaces in the Bishop Arts District. Participant (V-2) and Participant (V-4) suggested having more parking areas for more visitors who were coming from other areas. But at same time, participant (V-4) believed that the busy activity associated with parking was part of the character of the district. He also thought the congestion and busy activity associated with parking is a filtration system that keeps people away who do not accept the congestion. Participant (B-9) held a different perspective on parking. He stated that more parking will bring more development to the district, which would change the sense of community:

Yes, (the size right now is perfect) because we have no parking. When this (district) was built, they (residents) didn’t really have cars. They had street cars and so they didn’t build parking lots. And now, we don’t have any parking. We have these small little pockets to park. So, I think it’s getting overdeveloped now

and they have plans to build condos and everything down Davis, so I'm not happy about that.

Participant (V-3) was neutral on parking issues. She thought parking was the first concern in the Bishop Arts District development because it has changed the pedestrian environment. For example, valet service, which belonged to Dallas culture, should not be in the Bishop Arts District. But she also agreed that adding more parking would “change the landscape and the dynamics of the neighborhood.”

#### 4.3.4.2 Public transportation

Public transportation was another aspect associated with parking mentioned by participants. Public transportation, such as street cars, could provide access instead of private cars. Participant (V-6) suggested having buses or bringing street cars back which they had before. Participant (B-11) mentioned more public transportation should be encouraged like the D-link which was connecting downtown Dallas and the Arts District. Public transportation would also provide more opportunities to create a pedestrian environment. Participant (V-2) thought that reducing on-street parking would create more space for sidewalks and outdoor activity spaces.

#### 4.3.4.3 Revitalization expansion

Expanding the retail and revitalization area of the Bishop Arts District was mentioned because the size of the district was considered too small in terms of the numbers of streets and amount of street frontage for retail. Participant (V-3) described the current Bishop Arts District as a short “up and down shopping strip.” Pedestrians hence were limited by the extent of the retail area. Participant (V-5) suggested improving the surrounding streets to accommodate more residential. She explained that the residents around the district are still low income. They have been participating in the space but are restricted in terms of spending. Adding residential to Bishop Arts District was suggested as a way to “to start to get people living in the space and using the

space.” Having similar thoughts on retail expansion, participant (B-11) believed retail expanding to other streets would increase tax income, which could benefit the public areas by providing funds to “pay for new trees and new planters.”

#### 4.3.4.4 Business diversity

Restaurants and small retail contribute to the social life of North Bishop Avenue. Food was mentioned several times by participants as one of most appealing aspects of the Bishop Arts District. Participant (V-3) mentioned “food is a little gem (here).” Participant (V-4) thought the nice food in the district provided a “different atmosphere.” A few participants suggested that the Bishop Art District would be more appealing to the public by adding other types of businesses providing special products and services.

Participant (V-6) stated that:

I would continue to add some businesses and maybe diversify a little bit the businesses because right now it's boutique shops and restaurants only, pretty much. So, like having a cool barber – old school barber shop would be fun. You know something like a boot store you know – a handmade boot store.

Participant (R-13) also stated:

...more uniqueness of the restaurants. It can be a little more diverse. A lot more like here...bars and coffee shop. Maybe you can expand it to more like Asian or Latin America or even European.

#### 4.3.4.5 Public infrastructure and other issues

Surprisingly, business owners were more concerned with the pedestrian environment than were general visitors. Participant (B-9) mentioned to add more trees and plantings in the alleys, like the trees on the sidewalks. Participant (B-10) suggested adding more public furniture such as benches, trash cans and a public restroom. Beyond the sense of community and history, the public infrastructure would help to build a better pedestrian environment. Participant (B-11) suggested adding more crosswalks and lights.

Colors were mentioned by both visitors and real estate professionals in response to suggestions for improvement. Participant (V-2) thought more colors would be helpful to

differentiate the buildings. Participant (R-13) thought the district would be more unique and remarkable if the colors could be more exaggerated.

#### 4.4 Themes of Identity

This research focuses on the design attributes of identity in a revitalized commercial district. The research recorded design attributes in the Bishop Arts District based on the knowledge and experience of the participants and the researcher. The participants also mentioned other key elements important to creation of a revitalized commercial district. This analysis combined the data of on-site observations and interview analysis, and key attributes and components are abstracted and emerged into four broad themes (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1 Emergent themes of the revitalized commercial district.

THEMES		
History	Community culture Sense of neighborhood	
Diversity	Culture Retail Individualization Eclectic character	
Design	Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street network</li> <li>• Street width</li> <li>• Pedstrian</li> <li>• Landscaping</li> <li>• Street activities</li> <li>• Low traffic</li> </ul>
	Gateway	Focal point
	Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small shops</li> <li>• Continuous transparent storefronts</li> <li>• Authenticity</li> <li>Differentiation</li> </ul>
	Public arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Murals</li> <li>• Advertisement</li> <li>• Street furniture</li> <li>• Private business sign</li> </ul>
Implications for public policy	Parking Public transportation Business Expansion Residential Public infrastructure	

#### 4.4.1 History

History is the thread of continuity which links the Bishop Arts District's past to its present. Most participants indicated that the life style of the revitalized district is different from the rest of Dallas. This is a place to be relaxed and for meeting up with friends. As found in the literature review, this district was originally designed as “bedroom neighborhood” for the workers who had jobs in downtown Dallas. The current district is highly praised because original design attributes such as human scale, street width and

buildings were retained as they were before, contributing to identity and a sense of place in the district. The participants stated that those design attributes identify the Bishop Arts District and are key distinguishing characteristics. Close interpersonal relationships and business support help to keep the sense of neighborhood as it was.

#### *4.4.2 Diversity*

Diversity is the foundation that this commercial revitalization is built on. In the interviews with the different participants, diversity was mentioned as a key to bringing different cultures, to adding different types of retail and to individualizing the stores and arts. Diversified cultures attract various people. Participant (V-3) mentioned that they appreciate different races and cultures in the Bishop Arts District. It reminded them of the culture and people they met during their travelling. Diversified retail not only increases tax income through retail activities, but also provides services for local residents' needs. Individualized attributes include unique stores, arts and street furniture. These are the attributes that are keys to differentiate the district from chain stores and traditional shopping malls in Dallas.

#### *4.4.3 Design*

Observation and interviews reveal identity factors in four primary design attributes: gateway, buildings, streets and public arts. Those attributes directly reflect the character of this commercial revitalization. They are also the attributes creating a pedestrian-dominated environment which carries a sense of place.

- Streets

Streets are primary attributes studied and observed by the researchers and participants. Streets play critical roles in the Bishop Arts District, tying vehicular movement and pedestrian activity to retail activity. The special offset street pattern between West Davis Street and North Bishop Avenue positions the commercial district to

be in an area of low traffic speed. This helps to create a pedestrian friendly environment by calming traffic speeds and separating vehicle traffic from pedestrian activity. The sidewalks along the streets are one of the most important design attributes contributing to the pedestrian friendly environment. In the Bishop Arts District, retail serves the pedestrians on the sidewalk, which is a unique aspect of Bishop Arts retail compared to most other places in Dallas. The sidewalk is also the place where pedestrians enjoy seeing the rich visual elements of the district and being watched. Plantings on the sidewalk are also a critical attribute for the environment. One participant mentioned repetition of the mature trees give a boulevard feeling. The pavement on the sidewalk is another setting where public arts such as artistic paving patterns are incorporated.

- Gateway

Gateway is another identified attribute which could “be reinforced, helped in its (district’s) distinctness, marked, and made more vivid” (Alexandra, 1977, p. 277). As discussed in the on-site observation section, the street network—specifically the offset intersections of Davis and North Bishop Avenue—provides conditions to separate heavy traffic from the district and to set up a boundary. Though the condition provides the Bishop Arts District an opportunity for a focal point or gateway, the gateway form at its current location is invisible. A more substantial visual gateway is suggested to set up as a strong “starting point” (Alexandra, P.279) of the pedestrian shopping street.

- Buildings

Buildings are cited by many participants as authentic attributes that contribute to the identity of the revitalized commercial district. “Building as attribute” includes the size of shops, the transparent storefronts, and building types and materials. Observing the buildings on the retail strip, most commercial buildings were one or two stories, and were maintained with the same original materials. Those vintage buildings were valued by the

participants as historical resources. For this reason, historical buildings with original materials need to be preserved as attributes of identity.

The individuation that contributes to the identity of the Bishop Arts District is characterized by size of shops, types of storefronts and differentiated design styles. As one business owner mentioned, that small size of shop is the level they could afford and manage. The transparent quality is created by storefront windows that would also be the right size to express their personality and design taste. As Alexander said, "The larger they (the stores) become, the less personal their service is." (Alexander, 1977, p. 433). The small size shops, at same time, allows for enriching the storefront displays. From the on-site observations, a completely open or transparent storefront in a restaurant often attracts pedestrian to stop and try the food. The awning, tables and chairs provide a simple but unique setting which "provides social glue for the community (Alexander, 1977, p.438).

Continuous storefronts with transparency are a critical platform to contribute to a sense of safety, to arouse pedestrian's curiosity and to showcase the district's creativity. Participant (B-12) mentioned that she was attracted by those small stores when she was passing on the sidewalk. She enjoyed looking at different and unique design and products from the owners. The pedestrian felt curious about the creative design and decided to go inside. The transparent storefront, then, is a barrier that arouses a psychological response to draw the pedestrian inside the store. In addition, participant (V-3) mentioned the importance of the lights for advertisement. In fact, transparent storefronts and their lighting create a well-lit street wall that provides a sense of safety and can help reduce the crime that occasionally happens in the district (Participant B-12).

- Public art

“A piece of public art or an artist’s skilled transformation of something otherwise mundane, such as street furniture, give us something to observe, ponder and mention” (Sucher, 2000, p.158). As several participants mentioned, they like the artistic feeling of the Bishop Arts. Reflecting the diversity so valued by the participants, the public arts in the Bishop Arts District are varied and individual, which contributes to the eclectic character and artistic feeling. The forms of the public arts include murals, retail advertisements, handmade street furniture, pavement art, store signs and street signs. These artistic forms enhance the revitalized district’s identity, and give a new energy and vitality to the neighborhood.

#### *4.4.4 Implications for Public policy*

Based on the interview analysis, maintaining the district’s identity and future expansion and improvements must be coordinated with public policy. The parking problems, the desire for public transportation, expansion of the retail area, residential apartments and more infrastructures were frequently mentioned in response to the interview questions regarding the need for district improvements. Though they are not related to design attributes directly, they will influence the commercial revitalization. Participant (B-11) mentioned that solutions to the parking problem needed to be coordinated with new public transportation, like a trolley. In addition to parking, serious commercial expansion or more residential cannot be only planned and designed by developers and designers; it will involve relevant city departments’ cooperation in the coordination of land use, transportation and development regulations.

#### 4.5 Summary

The findings from on-site observation and interview analysis reveal the foundations of identity for commercial revitalization in this historic neighborhood. The four

themes developed include history, diversity, design attributes and implications for public policy. Commercial revitalization in historic neighborhoods needs to be built upon a deep understanding of the district's history and the encouragement of diversity as a philosophy of revitalization. Although design attributes were found through observation and interviews and can be linked to the design attributes described in the literature, they could not be studied and evaluated separate from their context of history, diversity and public policy. In addition, from the responses, participants would like to see other aspects addressed, such as parking and public transportation improvement. In other words, public policy needs to keep pace with the revitalization in all stages. Following chapter covers the conclusions of the research, implications for landscape architecture and recommendations for further study.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings that were discovered through the case study strategy as applied to the neighborhood commercial revitalization of the Bishop Arts District. The case study strategy included review of secondary documents revealing the history of the site, on-site observation of the district, and interviews with real estate professionals, business owners and visitors. The data from these three groups were compared and combined in Chapter Four, to allow for the following discussion on how four broad themes—history, diversity, design attributes and implications for public policy—emerged to answer the research questions:

1. What are the present design attributes in the Bishop Arts District?
2. Do the design attributes reflect an identity for the district?
3. Which design attributes contribute most to enhance visitors experience in the district?

The chapter also introduces the relevance of the findings to the profession of landscape architecture and recommendations for further study.

#### 5.2 Findings and Discussion

This section summarizes the findings based on the themes developed from secondary documentation, on-site observation and interview questions as they relate to each research question. It is clear that physical design attributes are a key to strong district identity, but discussion of the attributes cannot be separated from history, diversity and their implications for public policy.

- 1) What are the present design attributes in the Bishop Arts District?

The definition and relative importance of design attributes in the Bishop Arts District needs to be discussed in the context of the themes of history and diversity.

First, the review of secondary documents revealed that the Bishop Arts District is a revitalized neighborhood commercial district that has deep roots in the history of the city. It started as a neighborhood associated the commercial activities for people working in Dallas. It has value for commercial revitalization largely because the old architecture and narrow streets have been preserved. To understand and define the design attributes one needs to consider the influence of the district's history, which may connect with the local residents' emotional response and attachment to the area. History and how history is recalled in design attributes is a thread of continuity which connects the Bishop Arts District's past to its present. A number of physical design attributes reflect this connection to the past, including:

- Pattern and narrow width of the streets;
- Scale and façade design of the commercial buildings;
- Details
  - original building lights
  - vintage business signs
  - continuous original storefront windows
  - building details.

Other design elements that have been added more recently, such as street lights and commercial benches, have been selected to complement the historic character of the original design attributes. All these attributes tie the experience of the district to its history, which may increase the emotional attachment and attraction to the area.

Second, the on-site observations and interview responses reveal that the design attributes that speak to the district's diversity, individuation and creativity are important to

the strong identity of the district. For example, the following design attributes can contribute to the district's eclectic character:

- Public art
- Creative, individualized storefront design
- Handmade furnishings and planters
- Brightly painted pots
- A combination of new and vintage business signs
- Murals
- Diverse retail offerings

Public arts, such as the painted wall murals and outdoor sculptures and individual creativity in storefront design are design attributes that would be used and emphasized in this district more than in the central business district. Other elements, such as the privately owned, handmade benches and planters, brightly painted pots, and a combination of new and vintage business signs also are important to the eclectic and diverse character of the district.

2) Do the design attributes reflect an identity for the district?

The on-site observation and interviews reveal that the design attributes of the Bishop Arts District reflect an identity for the district through a combination of preserving its historic attributes, such as the street patterns and historical buildings, and adding attributes that contribute to the district's diverse and eclectic character, all within a safe and comfortable pedestrian-friendly environment. The following design attributes help to contribute to the identity of the Bishop Arts District:

Street design:

- Narrow width
  - Comfortable "outdoor room" scale

- Perceived as “pedestrian – friendly”
- Calms traffic
- Streetscape
  - Continuous sidewalks
  - Location at curb, spacing, and repetition of street trees
  - Rich sidewalk paving materials
- On – street parking
  - Perception of convenience
  - Calms traffic

Gateway:

- Offset alignment of North Bishop Avenue creates edge, sense of arrival and focal point
- Current “gateway” at focal point is not highly visible; and suggesting a more substantial design

Buildings:

- Small scale, mostly 1 to 2 stories, proportional to street width
- Transparent storefronts at sidewalk level
- Rich brick masonry (original)
- Small shop sizes
  - Allows for more shops and more diversity
  - More affordable
  - Easier to individuate façade details and displays
- Details
  - Awnings
  - Pass – through windows

- Sidewalk tables and chairs
- Lights

Public art:

- Wall murals
- Sculpture
- Handmade street furnishings
- Pavement art
- Store signs

Interviews also suggest that there are no standard criteria for uniqueness. The interview participants held different opinions and definitions of design attributes. For example, some participants thought of the Bishop Arts District as historic and differentiated it from Dallas because the buildings and the streets are maintained in a way that gives the district a sense of authenticity. Some participants, however, ascribed the uniqueness of Bishop Arts District to the personality and individuality of the retail businesses. Without these original creative design expressions and public arts, the buildings are just general historic attributes, and the character they lend is not necessarily unique.

- 3) Which design attributes contribute most to enhance visitors' experience in the district?

From the interview analysis, it was evident that the pattern, narrow width and character of the streets, the scale and historic materials of the buildings, and the large storefront windows that line the sidewalks and offer pedestrians up-close views of displays and of other patrons are the design attributes that contribute most to enhance visitors' experience in the Bishop Arts District. Participant (V-3) emphasizes that she was impressed by the amount of pedestrian "foot traffic" that happened in the Bishop Arts

District. She thought that the continuous retails, narrow streets and old buildings were attractive to people and allowed for an enjoyable nights in the district.

However, it is evident from observation that many other attributes build on the basic framework of narrow streets, historic buildings and storefront windows and combine to create the area's strong identity. The "foot traffic" mentioned above would not be possible without continuous sidewalks. It is made to feel more comfortable and human-scaled by the addition of street trees and parking at the edge of the street, which create an "outdoor room" feeling. The walks are just wide enough to have tables for the restaurants and ice cream store.

The safe, continuous sidewalk system allows the rich diversity of detail to be appreciated at a walking pace. Elements mentioned previously, such as murals, sculpture, unique business signage, handmade benches and planters, pots and building lights, and pavement art combine with the human-scaled framework of streets and buildings and together result in a strong identity.

Other findings from on-site observations and the interviews, regarding the improvement of the Bishop Arts District, suggest that the identity of the commercial revitalization project required a comprehensive strategy that included the community, the developer and supportive business owners. In some cases, this would also require coordination with public policy.

Implications for public policy:

- Public transportation (streetcars)
- Managing parking consistent with district character
- Expansion of retail area
- Adding residential apartments
- Infrastructure improvements

Some design attributes as discussed previously would be preserved or added in terms of the district history and the intent of developers. Other aspects such as public parking, retail expansion policy and public transportation need to be considered at the level of policy, city planning, codes and regulations. It is clear that all these areas require coordination to have the unique combination of attributes that give the Bishop Arts District a strong identity.

### 5.3 Relevance to the Landscape Architecture Profession

As discussed in previous chapters, neighborhood commercial district revitalization is one type of urban revitalization. In addition to influencing public policy, this type of urban revitalization involves many design-related efforts, such as urban planning and design, complete street design, historic preservation, public arts planning, environmental protection and public participation, a combination that provides many opportunities for landscape architects in projects for both public clients and private developers. In the long term, these would involve projects at the district, block, street and site scale. These opportunities are more important as urban revitalization, urban infill and suburban retrofit become a bigger part of the landscape architecture profession.

### 5.4 Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations for future research are based on the data findings as well as the limitations of the research. The participants of this study understood the general definition of design attributes and their connection with the environment. The open-ended interviews allow the participants to express other thoughts which may help to develop research develop themes. However, one of the limitations of the research is that the answers provided by the participants were too broad to provide clear and efficient data from the questions. Most participants seem to define the design attributes as buildings while fewer participants would notice the small design attributes,

such as plant pots or street furniture. One weakness of the interview is the observation on design attributes could not be confirmed or evaluated by the participants. In addition, the researcher was not able to conduct enough interviews with real estate professionals, especially the project developers.

Therefore, the following recommendations for further study will enhance the research related to design attributes that can contribute to identity in neighborhood commercial revitalization:

- Develop a survey as a supplement for receiving participants' perceptions on specific design attributes.
- Encourage more professional participants for the interviews, such as developers and agency staff from planning departments, as well as more landscape architects and urban designers.
- Examine the themes of identity in other revitalized commercial districts.
- Compare at least three districts to for more reliable results.

Trends in development indicate an increase in urban revitalization projects. The Bishop Arts District can be a model of a successful neighborhood commercial revitalization that can provide lessons for city leaders, developers and designers. More specifically, the design attributes that contribute to the strong identity of the district, when properly understood in the context of history, diversity and public policy, offer ideas for district planning and design that can inform decision-makers and contribute to successful projects.

Appendix A  
IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Administration  
Regulatory Services  
817-272-3723  
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<http://www.uta.edu/research/administration>

**Institutional Review Board  
Notification of Exemption**

February 20, 2014

Chunling Wu  
Dr. James Richards  
School of Architecture

Protocol Number: 2014-0365

Protocol Title: *The design attributes of identity in revitalized commercial districts: implications of stakeholder's perceptions of the Bishop Arts District*

**EXEMPTION DETERMINATION**

The UT Arlington Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, or designee, has reviewed the above referenced study and found that it qualified for exemption under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects as referenced at Title 45CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, either directly or through identifiers linked to the subject; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You are therefore authorized to begin the research as of **February 20, 2014**.

Pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b)(4)(iii), investigators are required to, “promptly report to the IRB **any** proposed changes in the research activity, and to ensure that such changes in approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, are **not initiated without prior IRB review and approval** except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject.” Please be advised that as the principal investigator, you are required to report local adverse (unanticipated) events to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services within 24 hours of the occurrence or upon acknowledgement of the occurrence. All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented Human Subject Protection (HSP) Training on file with this office. Completion certificates are valid for 2 years from completion date.



Office of Research Administration  
Regulatory Services

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<http://www.uta.edu/research/administration>

The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human subjects in research. Should you have questions, or need to report completion of study procedures, please contact Robin Dickey at 817-272-9329 or [robind@uta.edu](mailto:robind@uta.edu). You may also contact Regulatory Services at 817-272-3723 or [regulatoryservices@uta.edu](mailto:regulatoryservices@uta.edu).



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February 28, 2014

Chunling Wu  
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**IRB No.:** 2014-0365

**Title:** *The design attributes of identity in revitalized commercial districts: implications of stakeholder's perceptions of the Bishop Arts District*

### EXEMPT MINOR MODIFICATION APPROVAL MEMO

The UT Arlington Institutional Review Board (UTA IRB) Chair (or designee) reviewed and approved the modification(s) to this exempt protocol on **February 28, 2014** in accordance with Title 45 CFR 46.101(b). Therefore, you are authorized to conduct your research. The modification(s), indicated below, was/were deemed minor and appropriate for exempt determination/acknowledgment review.

- Update the recruitment procedures to include snowball sampling

Pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b) (4) (iii), investigators are required to, “promptly report to the IRB *any* proposed changes in the research activity, and ensure that such changes in approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, **are not initiated without IRB review and approval** except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject.”

The modification approval will additionally be presented to the convened board on March 4, 2014 for full IRB acknowledgment [45 CFR 46.110(c)]. All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented Human Subjects Protection (HSP) training on file with the UT Arlington Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services.

The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human research subjects. Should you have questions or require further assistance, please contact Robin Dickey at [robind@uta.edu](mailto:robind@uta.edu) or you may contact the Office of Regulatory Services at 817-272-3723.

# UT Arlington Informed Consent Document

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## **FACULTY ADVISOR**

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## **TITLE OF PROJECT**

The design attributes of identity in revitalized commercial districts: implications of stakeholder's perceptions of the Bishop Arts District

## **INTRODUCTION**

You are being asked to participate in a research study about studying design attributes and how they contribute to identity of the Bishop Arts District based on stakeholders' and users' perceptions. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate or discontinuing your participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Please ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

## **PURPOSE**

The specific purpose of the study is to discover what design attributes are important to giving unique identity. Based on what visitors will value, implications can be drawn for future designers and developers of revitalized commercial districts.

## **DURATION**

Participation in this study will last approximately 30 minutes.

## **NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS**

The number of anticipated participants in this research study is 50.

## **PROCEDURES**

The procedures which will involve you as a research participant include:

1. You will read and sign the UT Arlington Informed Consent Document.
2. You will be asked interview questions which were prepared by the researcher. Questions will be about perception and thoughts on design attributes such as symbols and materials.
3. Other comments and thoughts mentioned by the participant about the Bishop Arts District will be recorded as well.

The interview will be audio recorded. After the interview, the tape will be transcribed, which means they will be typed exactly as they were recorded, word-for-word, by the researcher. The tape will be destroyed after transcription.

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### **POSSIBLE BENEFITS**

The data conducted from the interview will be contributed to urban design research and a reference for designers for future projects.

### **POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS**

There are no perceived risks or discomforts for participating in this research study. Should you experience any discomfort please inform the researcher, you have the right to quit any study procedures at any time at no consequence.

### **COMPENSATION**

No compensation will be offered for participation in this study.

### **ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES**

There are no alternative procedures offered for this study. However, you can elect not to participate in the study or quit at any time at no consequence.

### **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to decline participation in any or all study procedures or quit at any time at no consequence.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of this signed consent form and all data collected including transcriptions/tapes from this study will be stored in Professor James Richards's office, room 322 for at least three (3) years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. Additional research studies could evolve from the information you have provided, but your information will not be linked to you in anyway; it will be anonymous. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA Institutional Review Board (IRB), and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above. The IRB at UTA has reviewed and approved this study and the information within this consent form. If in the unlikely event it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review your research records, the University of Texas at Arlington will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law.

### **CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS**

Questions about this research study may be directed to the researcher's advisor, James Richards at 817-272-2801 or jrichard@uta.edu. Any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant or a research-related injury may be directed to the Office

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of Research Administration; Regulatory Services at 817-272-2105 or  
regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

**As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:**

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Signature and printed name of principal investigator or person obtaining consent

Date

## CONSENT

By signing below, you confirm that you are 18 years of age or older and have read or had this document read to you. You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time.

You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, to which you are otherwise entitled.

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**SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER**

**DATE**

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Appendix B  
Interview Analysis

	How would you describe the Bishop Arts	Design attributes reflect the history?	What design attributes contribute to the identity?	What design attributes are most appealing to you	How much satisfaction	How would you improve it?
Visitor 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>old commercial</li> <li>part of town,</li> <li>personal part of town, Pedestrian friendly,</li> <li>nice environment and business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>materials, managed to make paint a historic feel,</li> <li>keep old (compare with dallas, built new),</li> <li>find something significant and held on it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the materials, the design, old shop district</li> <li>small shops and pedestrian accessibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the energy of the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>very high</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no improvement of the district. but spread the idea outward from here</li> </ul>
Visitor 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>place to eat,</li> <li>cool places and stores, different from dallas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>don't know the history,</li> <li>but old feeling, brick building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>compact stores,</li> <li>art, drawing on the wall (artistic feeling)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anything historic and antique</li> </ul>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more parking,</li> <li>narrow street down,</li> <li>more color to differentiate the buildings</li> </ul>
Visitor 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eclectic,</li> <li>neighborhood,</li> <li>laid back,</li> <li>diversity (mixed races) in highly hispanic neighborhood,</li> <li>fun, food service is good, gem, not very dallas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes. At boulevard,</li> <li>old brick</li> <li>park benches,</li> <li>encompassing by the mature trees, like re-used area in Boston</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>walking street (give opportunities to social and connected)</li> <li>people know each other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>night activities,</li> <li>foot traffic,</li> <li>store light,</li> <li>history,</li> <li>authenticity,</li> <li>diversity and choice,</li> <li>living street, street activities</li> <li>suggest light,</li> <li>spirit of place, but not a scenic</li> </ul>	9.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>parking, but more parking it changes the landscape the dynamics of the neighborhood,</li> <li>no valet service,</li> <li>develop more street</li> <li>more vendors like Jefferson</li> </ul>
Visitor 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>relax, like Fort Worth,</li> <li>people are not pretensions</li> <li>cool coverage, without losing personality</li> <li>food is good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no. respect original design, they are art deco</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>buildings/redo but maintain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the attributes different from dallas</li> </ul>	9 to 10 grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more parking</li> <li>but constrained, keep demand high is filtration system to keep this area original</li> </ul>

	How would you describe the Bishop Arts	Design attributes reflect the history?	What design attributes contribute to the identity?	What design attributes are most appealing to you	How much satisfaction	How would you improve it?
Visitor 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in Oak Cliff, on the other side of the trinity river</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>space reflect</li> <li>like before, service same, neighborhood center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>furniture, windows display</li> <li>scale of the buildings</li> <li>size of street/a sense of scale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>scale of the buildings</li> <li>size of street/a sense of scale</li> <li>not specific items</li> </ul>	2-3 to 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve surrounding streets</li> <li>more residential (small apt)</li> <li>people participant</li> </ul>
Visitor 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>neat little pocket community within Dallas</li> <li>but very different feeling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>historic</li> <li>more contemporary</li> <li>community feeling</li> <li>walkability</li> <li>not being a kind of a transition area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>storefronts along Davis and Bishop</li> <li>transparency see through street signage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversity of the business</li> <li>overall design small street</li> <li>traffic slow down</li> <li>parking</li> </ul>	8.5 to 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>add more business</li> <li>diversify business (now boutique shops and restaurants)</li> <li>old school barber</li> <li>handmade boot store</li> <li>continue to put back over service into the community and sure that they know the history of community</li> </ul>
Visitor 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>human scale</li> <li>more pedestrian friendly than other places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not sure history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>brick, enclosed buildings</li> <li>many design pieces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>brick exposed and less glass glazed things</li> <li>only 7th street, not sure</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hard to say</li> </ul>
Business owner 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a good spot</li> <li>a lot of personalities</li> <li>a lot of mindsets</li> <li>carefree area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>slow process of revitalization to be</li> <li>low-key</li> <li>tight-knit community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the whole, they can not be separate. They only had bishop avenue, then influenced other streets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>old buildings, part of history</li> <li>individuals and difference</li> <li>warm feeling vs industrial feeling</li> </ul>	very high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>let more people to know it (it was like secret),</li> <li>more mouth not physical</li> </ul>

How would you describe the Bishop Arts	Design attributes reflect the history?	What design attributes contribute to the identity?	What design attributes are most appealing to you	How much satisfaction	How would you improve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small community, part of dallas, but different</li> <li>• not overdeveloped</li> <li>• business are privately owned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yes, hasn't been touched since 60s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• architecture</li> <li>• people (open and laid back)</li> <li>• architecture</li> <li>• people (open and laid back)</li> <li>• undeveloped</li> <li>• history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more atmosphere</li> <li>• a sense of community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• like but worried</li> <li>• rent high</li> <li>• small pockets to park but now getting overdevelop</li> <li>• condos and everything down to Davis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public traffic (street cars)</li> <li>• stop developers (destroy the area)</li> <li>• design infrastructure</li> </ul>
Business owner 9					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small business individually owned</li> <li>• affordable area</li> <li>• developing area (high crime, high homeless population)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no, the function is not same (it was grocery, but now it's now);</li> <li>• yes, in terms of buildings, streetscale.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unchanged architecture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• windows at the top of every shop (cool, unusual)</li> <li>• original ceiling and original concrete</li> <li>• light fixtures, vintage</li> <li>• hooks used to hang the awnings</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more park benches, trash cans, public restroom, make it better for the pedestrian and parking</li> <li>• develop more</li> </ul>
Business owner 10				10	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stepping out of Dallas, departure from Dallas</li> <li>• not so bureaucratic</li> <li>• little more relax</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yes, historic building, built in earlier 20 centuries</li> <li>• brick and mortar</li> <li>• alleyways connecting all the street together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buildings</li> <li>• nothing really physical unique about it, but the store front</li> <li>• the culture, the food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it's all unique one of kind shop</li> <li>• the unique culture, the sense of community not big change</li> <li>• buildings</li> <li>• diversity of the neighborhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>love here, wouldn't be anywhere else in Dallas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve parking</li> <li>• public traffic</li> <li>• tax policy to improve environment</li> <li>• do a complete street on Davis</li> <li>• more crosswalks, light on the crosswalks</li> </ul>
Business owner 11					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• walking area</li> <li>• a lot of people/night activities</li> <li>• community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yes, buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buildings</li> </ul>		7.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bigger parking</li> <li>• reduce crimes</li> </ul>
Employer 12					

Real estate professional 13	<p>How would you describe the Bishop Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unique area</li> <li>• unique stores</li> <li>• good restaurants and bars</li> </ul>	<p>Design attributes reflect the history?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• don't know the history</li> <li>• but in terms of appeals, yes, buildings</li> <li>• not new urban</li> <li>• combination</li> </ul>	<p>What design attributes contribute to the identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buildings</li> <li>• logo, colors</li> <li>• paint on the wall</li> <li>• the stuff on the street make you feel back 20-30s</li> </ul>	<p>What design attributes are most appealing to you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the whole environment</li> <li>• single stores</li> <li>• paint</li> </ul>	<p>How much satisfaction</p>	<p>How would you improve it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop more area</li> <li>• diversity of styles (different culture)</li> <li>• maybe exaggerated with colors</li> </ul>
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Appendix C  
Sample Email for Recruitment

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Chunling Wu. I am a graduate student in the Landscape Architecture Program at the University of Texas at Arlington. My thesis topic is “the design attributes of identity in revitalized commercial districts: implications of stakeholder’s perceptions.” It is about studying design attributes and how they contribute to the identity of the Bishop Arts District based on stakeholders’ and users’ perceptions.

I would like to request your participation in my research by conducting a face to face interview. The interview will take about 30 minutes. You will be asked questions to which you can provide your thoughts on design attributes from environment to details such as symbols and materials in Bishop Arts District. The data obtained from your interview will contribute to urban design research and provide a reference for designers for future projects.

If you would like to participate, please contact me by either email or call the phone number. Thank you for your consideration. Your participation will be invaluable to this research.

Sincerely,

**Chunling Wu**

Graduate student

Program in Landscape Architecture

The University of Texas at Arlington

Phone: 817-891-6435

Email: [chunling.wu@mavs.uta.edu](mailto:chunling.wu@mavs.uta.edu)

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### Biographical Information

Chunling Wu is from Shanghai, China. She graduated from Dong Hua University with her bachelor's degree in Environmental Art Design. After graduation, she worked in the urban design and civil engineering fields for 5 years.

She joined the Program in Landscape Architecture in the University of Texas at Arlington in 2011. She will graduate with a Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture in Spring 2014 and has career plans and interests in urban design, urban planning and urban sketching.