



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Lynda Courtney, Development Services Process Coordinator
Planning and Development Review Department

DATE: March 25, 2010

SUBJECT: COA Waller Creek Tunnel Waller Beach Facilities and Boat House
SPC-2009-0362C

Requests:

Approval of a CUP related to LDC 25-2-625, P- Public zoning
Approval of LDC 25-2-721A(4) – Recommendation of the Environmental Board for a site plan within the Waterfront Overlay Combining District,
Approval of 25-2-722, the Environmental Board recommendation for a “major urban water quality retrofit”,
Approval of a site plan in the Waterfront Overlay- Recommendation of the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board
Approval of a boat dock exceeding 30’ in length- Approval of the Parks Board

Project Area Description

The City of Austin - is developing a new major urban tunnel drainage project with limited surface access, parks and trails development and water quality improvements, and as such, has been named Waller Creek Tunnel. The tunnel and associated improvements will follow a phased construction concept, and broken into separate site plans and permits. The phase of construction presented in this package is the end point of the tunnel that flows into Lady Bird Lake. The improvements planned for this segment of the project are located in the Waterfront Overlay Combining District. Recommendations and approval are required by several boards and commissions whose jurisdiction include this waterfront area.

The proposed Waller Creek Tunnel Waller Beach Facilities site is located at 74 Trinity Street, on parkland adjacent to the Four Seasons Hotel and to the Mexican American Cultural Center. (Required parking of 4 spaces is provided for this facility on site but if

there are any instances that require additional parking, overflow parking is available in the MACC parking lots.) The site encompasses 28.7 acres, but the limits of construction are only approximately 3 acres for development of the proposed facilities and improvements. The project site is located within the City of Austin Full-Purpose Jurisdiction, is currently used as parkland and boathouse, and has access from Trinity Street by land or Lady Bird Lake, by water. The proposed project is located within the Town Lake and Waller Creek Watersheds which are classified as Urban.

Development activities to be constructed under this contract include demolition of existing buildings and impervious cover and the installation of a new boathouse with utilities, relocation of docks, some parking, an on-site storm water collection system, sidewalks, landscaping, and a water quality pond. The boat house has been designed to meet the requirements of Commercial Design Standards and the design standards in the Waterfront Overlay combining district.

During the site excavation, temporary stormwater control measures to prevent sediment from leaving the site will be provided downstream of construction activity which may cause disturbance. Stabilized construction entrances will be installed as necessary. Controls will be installed to meet or exceed City of Austin details and specifications, prior to the initiation of work in affected areas and will remain in place until work is completed and specified revegetation of grass is achieved.

Waterfront Overlay

This site is located in the Waterfront Overlay Combining District (LDC 25-2 Divisions 6 through 8) and meets all requirements set forth in the Land Development Code. One minor variance is requested, as explained below. This site meets the definition of “Community Park” as portions of the site are within 50’ of the shoreline of Town Lake (Lady Bird Lake) (LDC25-2-671 (1e) and the proposed uses of boat rentals, special sports facilities and special recreational facilities are allowed in that designation. Pedestrian oriented uses include parks and recreation uses. Pedestrian oriented uses are permitted on the ground floor of a structure and at least 50% of the ground floor area must be pedestrian-oriented uses. In the primary setback area, park facilities are permitted if the facilities are located on park land and if the impervious cover does not exceed 15%. The impervious cover proposed in this site plan in the primary setback measures 14.4% impervious cover, and the proposed use meets specified allowable uses.

Water/Wastewater

Water service will be provided by the City of Austin. Wastewater service will be provided by the City of Austin.

Drainage

This site is located at the mouth of Waller Creek, at Lady Bird Lake, so the existing site drainage patterns shows that site runoff is directed towards Lady Bird Lake and Waller Creek, generally sloping to the south by southeast.

The permanent water quality ponds will be constructed as part of this contract; however, these ponds will not be utilized until the PARD Boat House is constructed. The water quality pond will serve as the permanent water quality mechanism for all improvements. Detention ponds are not a requirement of this project.

Vegetation

The project site consists of mainly manicured landscaping in an urban park setting. There are also wetlands in the form of vegetative strips along the shorelines of Waller Creek and Lady Bird Lake

The existing wetland located at the proposed PARD Boat Facility will be modified, but not removed entirely. The more critical features of the forested area adjacent to Waller Creek delta will be protected. Wetland creation in this area will take place through the WCTP mitigation plan.

All disturbed areas will be reseeded and revegetated according to 609S specifications.

Variance Request

As and informational courtesy, the administrative environmental variances being requested for this site plan are as follows:

Administrative variance from Land Development Code 25-8-261 to allow development within the Critical Water Quality Zone;

Administrative variance from Land Development Code 25-7-92 to allow encroachment in the floodplain for the construction of the PARD Boat House and improvements;

One minor variance request from Waterfront Overlay (LDC 25-2-738F) is requested. The boat house design provides at least 60% glass in the upper ground level portion of the building, and all of it is clear or lightly tinted transparent glass, except the window wall adjacent to the bathrooms and locker rooms, which is translucent “art glass”. Also, the lower level boat storage, which is topographically cut into the site on the north side and ground level on the south, does not have windows, but does have full roll-up overhead doors to access the boats.

Waller Creek Tunnel and the Town Lake Corridor Goals and Policies

Waller Creek Beach/ PARD Boat House
SPC-2009-0362C

Goals:

Water Quality

1. Protect and improve water quality

The Waller Creek Tunnel is, overall, a water diversion and water quality project. This site plan represents the outlet end of the tunnel, where the captured, diverted water is put into Lady Bird Lake. Filters, traps, and sedimentation will improve the

water quality that goes into the tunnel. After the tunnel is operational, the maintenance of a relatively constant water flow in the creek will reduce the flush of trash and sediment during the dry season that dumps into Lady Bird Lake, thereby improving the water quality and aesthetic quality of the Waller Creek mouth at Lady Bird Lake.

Land Use

2. Create superior waterfront-related planning

The use of the waterfront for parks-related activities has been a major part of the Austin Comprehensive Plan since the 1970's. The later-added Waterfront Overlay Ordinance regulated restrictions of certain uses and severe reduction of development and impervious cover closest to the waterfront setback, with less restrictiveness as development was set further back from the waterfront. Later design regulations and restrictions have been additionally imposed in subdistrict requirements and by Commercial Design Standards. This site plan complies with all requirements and restrictions.

3. Compatibility with Town Lake (Lady Bird Lake)

The Parks boat house, docks, trails, ponds, water features, landscaping, viewpoints and features are compatible with Lady Bird Lake use and enjoyment. The project combines the technical engineering requirements of the Waller Creek Tunnel outlet with the aesthetic and community appreciation of well-designed parkland, amenities, and activities, fully available and accessible to the public.

4. Cooperative atmosphere for realization of waterfront potential

The hike and bike trails which currently pass through this portion of the Waterfront Overlay will be upgraded to provide more opportunity for access to the nearby municipal or parks facilities, to commercial businesses, to and from nearby neighborhoods, and to easily connect to trail networks. Pedestrian uses as well as pedestrian comforts such as benches, restrooms and water fountains are improved.

Zoning

5. Improve zoning for best urban design, compatibility, pedestrian use

The Waller Creek Master Plan, currently under review and public input, includes the location at the mouth of Waller Creek, included in the area of this site plan. Urban design, compatibility and pedestrian use are of primary concern in the formulation of this zoning overlay plan.

Access

6. Provide visual and physical access to the waterfront

This project and design provides visual and physical access to the waterfront, and into the water for recreation and boat use.

Parklands

7. Establish a Great Central Park for Austin

The Waller Creek Tunnel/ PARD Boat House is part of the use of the Waterfront as a “Great Central Park”, for the enjoyment, use and participation of all the citizens of Austin. This project dovetails nicely with the adjacent Mexican American Cultural Center as a structured, parks-use area along this portion of Lady Bird Lake.

8. Excellence in design

Austin’s image, personality, and pride in its natural beauty will be continued and reflected in the architectural and landscape architectural designs of the boat house project, which is environmentally designed to embody Austin’s Green standards. Native materials and plants are used throughout, and innovative water and energy conservation practices and techniques are designed into the projects to maintain high standards and contribute to the image and personality of the Austin waterfront.

9. Spiritual relationship of waterfront to community

Wetlands and wet ponds are maintained, to employ sound environmental practice and to provide ongoing educational opportunities in conjunction with the active water recreational and cultural activities envisioned for the project. The aesthetic appeal of the project will allow for enjoyment of the beauty of nature with safe and comfortable refuges from inclement weather conditions, places to gather or individually sit, relax and reflect.

10. Rich, varied cultural environment

This project provides opportunity for recreation and instruction and for the potential for physical and educational improvements for citizens of all ages, cultures and social levels.

11. Acquire additional parkland along Town Lake and urban creeks

The development of the Waller Creek Tunnel will allow for the redevelopment of additional land along Waller Creek, for increased pedestrian and park potential as well as for increased commercial development. This project has acquired over \$1 million in real estate for PARD in this area in order to provide access into this section of parkland from Trinity Street.

Recommendations

Staff recommends approval of this site plan without conditions

If you need further details, please feel free to contact me at 974-2810.

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Planning and Development Review Department