



AUSTIN DESIGN COMMISSION

May 25, 2010

RE: Waller Creek District Master Plan

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council:

On April 26, 2010 the Design Commission received a presentation on the Waller Creek District Master Plan by George Adams, PDRD. The master plan outlined a vision for the future, challenges and opportunities, recommendations, implementation strategies, and proposed development standards. Subsequently, the Project Review Committee received an informal presentation from Gary Jackson, Project Manager of the Waller Creek Tunnel Project to review coordination of the Tunnel Project with the Master Plan.

We support the plan recommendations of:

- Enhancing the open space value of the creek corridor
- Creating an interwoven web of appropriately scaled pedestrian and bicycle linkages
- Promoting development activity and investment along the corridor.

We are concerned about the following:

- Integration of the Waller Creek District Plan with the Downtown Plan (DAP). Is the district plan a subset of the DAP? If so, then reference the DAP, but don't take specifics from it that may change over time.
- Building massing including setbacks and stepbacks along the creek front should be developed specifically rather than lifting from the DAP.
- We feel that the Density Bonus provisions should be tied to the framework of the Downtown Density Bonus Plan.
- Lack of information on stormwater runoff impacts on Waller Creek of the proposed new streets and buildings.
- Publicly Accessible Open Space development standard needs to show a percentage of vegetated area, i.e. 25-30% vegetated similar to LEED requirements.
- Rather than just Open Space requirements, define the quality of the open space and design intent that is desired, i.e. welcoming, shaded, plants, water, etc.
- Rather than just Streetscapes, define the quality of the streets and design intent that is desired, i.e. walkable, interesting streets.
- Define "creek access". Discourage development that turns its back to the creek.
- Boardwalks in the middle of the creek block the view of the creek. Long lengths should be minimized and "rest zones" should be incorporated.
- Parking Authority needs to review the parking needs of the entire district rather than have parking served on a individual project basis.
- Encourage uses that will enhance the vibrancy of the district.

We recommend the following:

- WCDP should have an on-going task force to address possible adjustments as market conditions change.


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- Design Commission could be the guardian of WCDP standards/guidelines and alternative compliance reviews.
- Research green infrastructure in other cities and implement as part of the WCDP.
- Maximize use of the tunnel for existing and future surface water run off.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Waller Creek District Master Plan and the Waller Creek Tunnel Plan and look forward to our next update on the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bart Whatley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bart" and last name "Whatley" clearly distinguishable.

Bart Whatley
Chair, City of Austin Design Commission