

Site Analysis

Overview

The library site is located on Cesar Chavez Street, Austin, Texas and is bounded by Cesar Chavez Street to the south, West Avenue to the west, (future) Second Street to the north and the Shoal Creek watershed to the east.

The primary features of the site are unobstructed views to the south and Ladybird Lake, and prominent exposure when approaching the site from the west as a result of the manner in which the decommissioned Seaholm Power facility is set back from Cesar Chavez Street.

The site is also immediately adjacent to the Shoal Creek waterway and the Lance Armstrong Bikeway which currently serve as a major pedestrian and bicycle access route to Ladybird Lake which is a major recreational asset for the City of Austin.

East of the Site

Shoal Creek Trail and the Lance Armstrong Bikeway are located to the East of the site. It is anticipated that an important entry to the new library will be located on the east side of the site off of Shoal Creek to link the building to the landscape. This will protect the entry and the anticipated outdoor space from the direct afternoon solar exposure at the West. In this way, this approach to the library will be able to accommodate outdoor activities that will allow the library to reflect the active character associated with the City of Austin.

West of the Site

The outdoor lawn space currently south of the Seaholm plant and West of the Library site, will remain open space, as we have been informed that this is not an anticipated building site. Sun control in the afternoon will be a challenge on this façade.

South of the Site

The Library will have southern solar exposure for the primary hours of operation which will facilitate natural daylighting strategies. Carefully applied daylighting strategies will result in comfortable naturally lit interior spaces and reduced building lighting energy use. Successful daylighting strategies will require integrated shading devices and high performance glazing systems to balance the desire for natural light with a strategy to reduce solar heat gain.

The unobstructed southern exposure will also provide the design team access to prevailing southeasterly winds. This will allow the building to be naturally ventilated in appropriate areas during periods when the exterior temperature and humidity levels are suitable.

The current character of Cesar Chavez suggests that a southern Library edge should be designed to relate drivers more than walkers. However, the design team will look to create a more pedestrian friendly edge at grade level anticipating potential future changes, and reflecting the current desires of the pedestrian pathways defined in the Great Streets program.

The design team also sees the view across Ladybird Lake from the south as a great opportunity to achieve a significant presence for this important civic project.

North of the Site

Immediately north of the site is a substation for Austin Energy, which is anticipated to be screened from view at the street level by an Art in Public Places project.

Zoning Overview

This site is zoned "P" The site has a number of overlay districts as follows: Urban Design Guidelines for Austin, Great Streets Program, Waterfront Overlay District – North Shore Central Subdistrict, Downtown Creeks Overlay District, Capital View Corridor #8, and possibly the Central Urban Redevelopment (CURE) Combining District, and Conditional Overlay Combining District.



Great Streets

The streets adjacent to the site are defined in the Great Streets Program. Pedestrian Dominant Street is the formal classification for Second Street. Second Street will have an 18' setback from the curb, pedestrian orientation fronting the street, and fenestration as set out in the criteria for transparency.

Per the Great Streets Program's Bicycle/Local Access definition, West Avenue will have an 18' setback from the curb. The design team will try to use this portion of the ground floor to locate more opaque service elements required in the program since there is not a transparency requirement for this street. Note that locating service access areas of the program is a difficult task because there is no obvious "back" to the building. The pedestrian focus of Cesar Chavez, Second Street, and West Avenue create areas that would like to have a pedestrian friendly scale. This will create a challenge for locating less attractive building support elements such as dumpsters and loading docks.

The Great Streets program defines Cesar Chavez as a Commuter Boulevard. The resulting requirements are an 8' zone from back of curb identified as a curbside zone and a 10' Pedestrian zone behind that. Additionally there is a parallel parking lane identified on the north side of the street section which will be beneficial to the library.

Waterfront Overlay District

25-2-721 Waterfront Overlay (WO)

Combining District Regulations

This subsection provides requirements for review and approval of site plans.

- Approval of a site plan is required if an applicant requests a waiver from a requirement of this part under Section 25-2-713 (Variances).

- Review of a site plan by the director of the Parks and Recreation Department is required before the site plan may be approved. The director of the Parks and Recreation Department shall determine:
 - Whether the site plan is compatible with adopted park design guidelines; and
 - If significant historic, cultural, or archaeological sites are located on the property.
- The Land Use Commission shall request a recommendation from the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board before approving or denying a site plan within the Waterfront Overlay combining district and shall consider the recommendation provided by the board. If the board fails to make a recommendation as required under Section 25-2-715 (Review and Recommendation of the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board), the Land Use Commission may approve or deny the site plan without a recommendation.
- The Land Use Commission shall request a recommendation from the Environmental Board before approving or denying a site plan within the Waterfront Overlay combining district and shall consider the recommendation provided by the board. If the Environmental Board fails to make a recommendation, the Land Use Commission may approve or deny the site plan without a recommendation.

In a primary setback area:

- Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, parking areas and structures are prohibited; and
- Park facilities, including picnic tables, observation decks, trails, gazebos, and pavilions, are permitted if:
 - The park facilities are located on public park land; and
 - The impervious cover does not exceed 15 percent.

In a secondary setback area:

- Fountains, patios, terraces, outdoor restaurants, and similar uses are permitted; and
- Impervious cover may not exceed 30 percent.

This subsection provides requirements for parking areas.

- Surface parking:
 - Must be placed along roadways, if practicable; and
 - Must be screened from views from Town Lake, the Colorado River, park land, and the creeks named in this part.
- A parking structure that is above grade:
 - Must be on a pedestrian scale and either architecturally integrated with the associated building or screened from views from Town Lake, the Colorado River, park land, and the creeks named in this part; and
 - If it is adjacent to Town Lake, the Colorado River, park land, or a creek named in this part, it must incorporate pedestrian oriented uses at ground level.
- Setback requirements do not apply to a parking structure that is completely below grade.

This subsection provides design standards for buildings.

- Exterior mirrored glass and glare producing glass surface building materials are prohibited.
- Except in the City Hall subdistrict, a distinctive building top is required for a building that exceeds a height of 45 feet. Distinctive building tops include cornices, steeped parapets, hipped roofs, mansard roofs, stepped terraces, and domes. To the extent required to comply with the requirements of Chapter 13-1, Article 4 (Heliports and Helicopter Operations), a flat roof is permitted.
- Except in the City Hall subdistrict, a building base wall is required for a building that fronts on Town Lake, Shoal Creek, or Waller Creek, that adjoins public park land or Town Lake, or that is across a street from public park land. The base wall may not exceed a height of 45 feet.
- A building facade may not extend horizontally in an unbroken line for more than 160 feet.

Underground utility service is required, unless otherwise determined by the utility provider.

Trash receptacles, air conditioning or heating equipment, utility meters, loading areas, and external storage must be screened from public view.

Source: Section 13-2-700; Ord. 990225-70; Ord. 990715-115; Ord. 010607-8; Ord. 031211-11; Ord. 20090611-074.

North Shore Central Subdistrict

This subsection applies in the North Shore Central subdistrict of the Waterfront Overlay combining district.

The primary setback lines are located:

- 100 feet landward from the Town Lake shoreline;
- 60 feet from the Shoal Creek centerline; and
- 50 feet from the Waller Creek centerline.

Surface parking is prohibited, except for a parking area for buses, van pooling, taxis, delivery services, commercial loading, public transportation, the handicapped, or public access to park land.

The location of a garage access point or curb cut must minimize the disruption of pedestrian traffic on existing sidewalks.

A structure must fit within an envelope delineated by a 70 degree angle starting at a line 45 feet above the property boundary line nearest Town Lake, Shoal Creek, or Waller Creek, with the base of the angle being a horizontal plane extending from the line parallel to and away from the surface of Town Lake, Shoal Creek, or Waller Creek.

This subsection applies to a nonresidential use in a building adjacent to Town Lake.

- For a ground level wall that is visible from park land or a public right-of-way that adjoins park land, at least 60 percent of the wall area that is between 2 and 10 feet above grade must be constructed of clear or lightly tinted glass. The glass must allow pedestrians a view of the interior of the building.
- Entry ways or architectural detailing is required to break the continuity of nontransparent base walls.



- Except for transparent glass required by this subsection, natural building materials are required for an exterior surface visible from park land adjacent to Town Lake.

A building may not be constructed within 80 feet of the existing east curb line of Congress Avenue south of First Street.

Source: Section 13-2-702(c); Ord. 990225-70; Ord. 000309-39;

Ord. 031211-11.

Downtown Creeks Overlay District

25-2-167 Downtown Creeks (DC) Overlay

District Purpose and Boundaries

The purpose of the downtown creeks (DC) overlay district is to promote public accessibility to the creeks, to promote pedestrian use of the creeks, and to protect and enhance the scenic character of the creek corridors.

The DC overlay district applies to property within 60 feet of the centerline of creeks that is located within the CBD or DMU base districts.

Source: Section 13-2-175; Chapter 25.

In the Congress Avenue (CA), East Sixth / Pecan Street (PS), downtown parks (DP), and downtown creeks (DC) combining districts:

- Glass used on the first floor of a structure must have a visible transmittance rating of 0.6 or higher;
- Reflective surface building materials must not produce glare;
- Surface parking lots, curb cuts, and unscreened garage openings are prohibited.
- The Land Use Commission may waive the prohibition of this subsection after determining that:
 - Compliance with the prohibition is impractical;
 - The proposed project will not unreasonably impair pedestrian or vehicular movement; and
 - Adequate precautions have been made for public safety, convenience, and the aesthetic values of the combining district.

In the Downtown Creek combining district:

- A structure may not exceed a height of 60 feet
- Storage, trash collection, loading, and associated facilities must be screened from view from a creek.

Source: Section 13-2-717; Ord. 990225-70; Ord. 010607-8; Ord.

030612-93; Ord. 031211-11; Ord. 20080618-097.

Conditional Overlay Combining District

25-2-164 Conditional Overlay (CO) Combining

District Purpose

The purpose of a conditional overlay (CO) combining district is to modify use and site development regulations to address the specific circumstances presented by a site.

A CO combining district may be used to:

- Promote compatibility between competing or potentially incompatible uses;
- Ease the transition from one base district to another;
- Address land uses or sites with special requirements; and
- Guide development in unique circumstances.

Source: Section 13-2-120; Ord. 990225-70; Ord. 031211-11.

Capital View Corridor #8

Capital View Corridor #8 crosses the eastern half of the site but is not likely to impact the design of the library. The view corridor which is at the intersection of Lavaca and South Lamar is at an elevation of 600' above sea level. Using the recommended calculation for the height restriction for the New Central Library and taking into account the height of the capitol dome at 653' above sea level, this allows for a maximum building height of 637' above sea level at the Library site. Based on topographic information provided by the City of Austin the high point of the site is at 465' above sea level which will allow the design team a maximum building height of 178 which is significantly higher than what is anticipated for the library.



Neighboring Areas

Ladybird Lake

Lady Bird Lake is a reservoir on the Colorado River in downtown Austin, Texas, in the United States. The reservoir was formed in 1960 by the construction of Longhorn Dam at its eastern boundary by the City of Austin. The western end of the lake is bounded by Tom Miller Dam, built in 1939. The lake was created for several reasons, including the need for a cooling pond for the Holly Street Power Plant. The reservoir was also envisioned from the beginning as a recreational venue for the city. A system of hike and bike trails was built along the shoreline of the lake in the 1970s, establishing (what was then known as) Town Lake as a major recreational attraction for the City of Austin.

Seaholm Power Plant History

The now decommissioned Seaholm Power Plant was constructed between 1949-1956 and with iconic Art Deco detailing which has since been seen by the City of Austin as a historic resource targeted as a high priority target for preservation. The plant is named (posthumously, in 1960) after Walter Seaholm who held the city's electric utility together through the Depression and the Flood of 1935. It was initially fitted with five gas-fired steam turbines, which produced a power output of 40 MW, and was subsequently expanded to 120 MW which it operated at until its decommissioning in 1989.

In 1996 the City Council resolved to preserve Seaholm for a major public use following decommissioning and remediation. In November 1999, City Council passed a resolution directing the City Manager "to make recommendations outlining next steps for decommissioning the Seaholm Power Plant and soliciting proposals for the reuse of the plant.

In June 2000 Council authorized the hiring of ROMA Design Group to create a master plan which made recommendations about the urban design and economic redevelopment of the area surrounding the power plant facility.

On April 28, 2005, the Austin City Council selected Seaholm Power, LLC, and a development consortium lead by Southwest Strategies Group of Austin to enter into an Exclusive Negotiation Agreement with the City to redevelop the Seaholm Power Plant.



Shoal Creek Greenbelt

Shoal Creek served as the original western border of the City of Austin at its founding in 1839. Ever since then, Austinites have been enjoying and using Shoal Creek even though most of the area to the west of the creek remained undeveloped until the 1910s and 1920s.

Formal preservation of the creek began in 1875, when Governor and Mrs. Pease gave 23 acres along the creek and north of 15th Street to be preserved as Pease Park. In 1929, the City of Austin bought land to extend the park north to 24th Street, Goodall Wooten and others donated additional land that extended the green space to 29th Street.



Today, the “official” Pease Park extends to 24th Street, while the stretch between 24th and 29th is called the Shoal Creek Greenbelt. The hike and bike trail that is today possibly the most-used amenity of Shoal Creek, has the distinction of being the city’s first in its network of trails.

The creek and its surrounding park space has served an abundance of purposes over the years a place to jog and ride in varied natural surroundings, a place to let the dog run leash-free, a field trip destination for science classes, a channel for floodwaters flowing toward Town Lake.



The Shoal Creek Greenbelt is an urban park overseen by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department. The trail is 4.62 miles long and runs from the Ladybird Lake at its south end and the 2600 block of North Lamar to the north.



A New Central Library