

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Austin Wins National Grant for Sustainable Design and Planning for South Shore Central on Lady Bird Lake**

Austin, Texas — Austin is one of seven communities nationwide to win a 2012 grant from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to receive expert design and technical assistance to achieve sustainable development. The Austin grant will be used to assist planning efforts for promoting excellence in urban design and future development that is in harmony with protection of and public access to the Lady Bird Lake waterfront.

“Lady Bird Lake is a treasure in the heart of Austin’s urban core,” said Council Member Chris Riley. “We want to ensure that future growth respects and enhances the character of our lakefront. This grant will help us do that.”

The planning study will focus on the South Shore Central sub-district of the waterfront, bounded by Lady Bird Lake, South First Street to the west, and East Bouldin Creek to the south and west. Visit <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/downloads/waterfrontoverlaydistricts.pdf> for a map.

“This is a marvelous opportunity to do something really special along the waterfront,” said James Knight, who chairs the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board. “The South Shore Central area, perhaps more than any other place along our lakeshore, is likely to face increasing pressures to accommodate future growth. We have a unique opportunity to ensure that future development is well considered, well designed, and provides for truly great public access to our lakefront.”

The grant is part of the AIA’s Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program which focuses on the importance of developing sustainable communities through design. The SDAT program brings together multidisciplinary teams of professionals to work with community decision-makers and stakeholders through an intensive planning process. The mission of the SDAT program is to provide technical assistance and process expertise to help communities develop a vision and framework for a sustainable future. The grant application was sponsored by a partnership between City of Austin, Austin AIA, and the University of Texas at Austin’s School of Architecture, Urban Design program.

As part of AIA’s Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program, the grant will bring a national team of architects, planners and other professionals to Austin in the spring to work with the local community to provide an independent assessment and make recommendations. The expert team will work with public officials, community leaders and residents to shape the community’s strategy for addressing transportation, economic and environmental issues.

“The architects and other team members that we’ll assemble,” said Joel Mills, director of the AIA Center for Communities by Design, “will bring expertise to Austin from all across America, providing ‘best practices’ advice from around the nation, and an independent assessment of the opportunities Austin has.”

AIA has assigned Harris Steinberg FAIA as the team leader for the project. Mr. Steinberg is director of PennPraxis, the consulting arm of the School of Design, University of Pennsylvania. His projects include leading citizens in Philadelphia to Create a Civic Vision for the Central Delaware Riverfront.

Mr. Steinberg along with AIA staff from the Center for Communities by Design will visit Austin January 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> for a preliminary visit in preparation for the full SDAT visit later this spring. After touring the city, Mr. Steinberg and AIA staff will select and assemble a full team of six to seven additional professionals, drawn from various disciplines and from around the country, to visit Austin this spring for a three-day intensive planning process.

Mr. Steinberg and the AIA staff will begin their preliminary visit by attending the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board meeting on Monday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 PM. The meeting will be held in Room 325 at One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Road. The public is invited to attend and participate.

Citizens can view background documents and links regarding the SDAT project at the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board's webpage (see Special Projects):

<http://www.austintexas.gov/content/waterfront-planning-advisory-board>

For more information, contact Alan Holt at [alan.holt@austintexas.gov](mailto:alan.holt@austintexas.gov)

#### Background

In 1985, a Town Lake Corridor Study established policies and goals that led to the 1986 Waterfront Overlay Combining District Ordinance, established to protect and enhance the waterfront while providing a framework for future development. The ordinance established 15 sub-districts (now 16 sub-districts) along the 5.4-mile Town Lake Corridor.

The Waterfront Planning Advisory Board (WPAB), established by the City Council, is responsible for reviewing land-development issues and planning-level recommendations regarding proposed amendments impacting the WO combining district. The WPAB will use the AIA/SDAT process and consider the resulting recommendations to inform the Board's on-going work of reviewing waterfront development and ordinance issues. Information about the WPAB can be found on the City of Austin's website, as well as information and updates on the SDAT project:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/content/waterfront-planning-advisory-board>

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program is a community assistance program that focuses on the principles of sustainability. The program is operated from the AIA's Center for Communities by Design. For more information about the AIA/SDAT program:

<http://www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIAS075425>