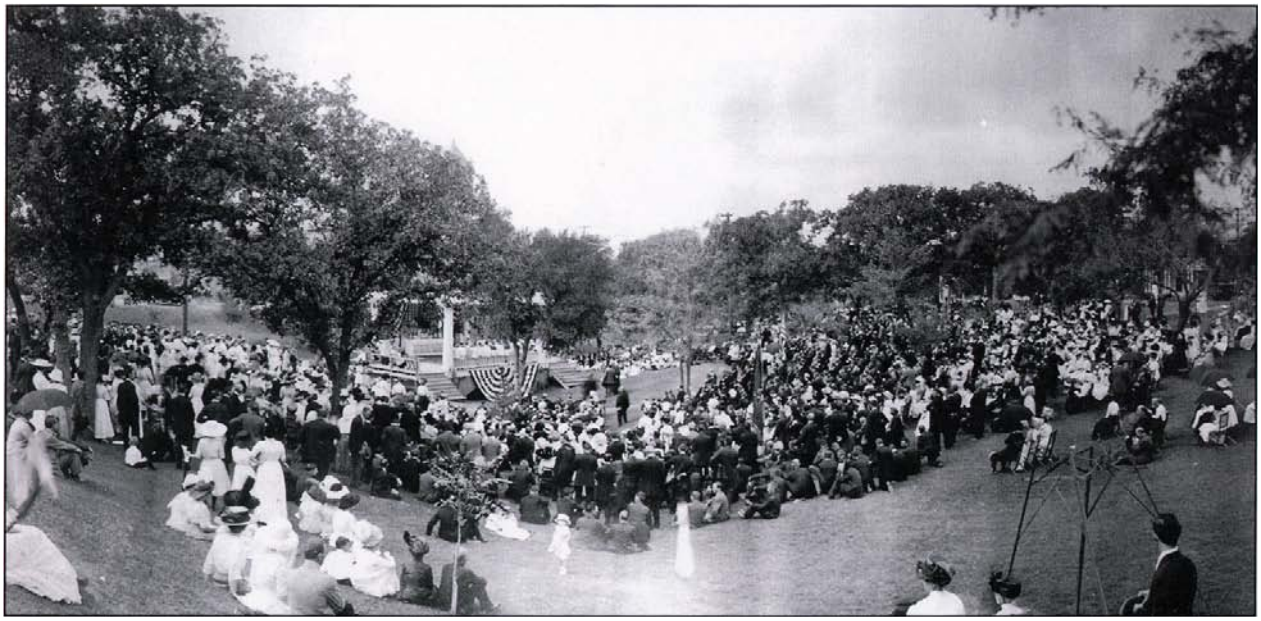
Draft

DOWNTOWN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

Downtown Austin Plan



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Inventory of Downtown Parks and Open Spaces
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan is to articulate a community-supported vision for Austin's downtown parks and open space system that will guide public and private investment and management of individual parks and the system as a whole. The Master Plan:

- Sets aspirations and articulates community goals.
- Develops a general vision for each downtown public park, appropriate to its specific location and function within the open space system.
- Creates an implementation strategy that establishes priorities and budgets.
- Recommends governance, funding and management mechanisms to support public parks.
- Promotes advocacy and leadership for downtown parks.

RELATIONSHIP TO DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN

The Parks and Open Space Master Plan is an integral part of the Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) and will inform the policy recommendations of the overall Plan, which will be finalized by Summer 2010. The Parks and Open Space Master Plan is also being informed by a broader view of downtown goals, including the need to bolster Downtown's competitive position in the region, to support compact and livable high-density development, to transform street rights-of-way into multi-modal corridors that extend the open space system and to make Downtown a place where everyone is welcome. The full Parks and Open Space Master Plan document will be appended to the final DAP and will be summarized in a chapter of the overall plan.

VISION STATEMENT

Austin's downtown parks and open spaces will augment our identity and bolster our economy by creating signature, high-quality places that serve the community's diverse population, connect it to nature and provide it with unique opportunities for active and passive recreation and entertainment. This will be achieved through strategic public, private and non-profit investments in park and open space improvements and new parks, synchronized with a high standard of programming and upkeep.

CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

To achieve this vision, a range of challenges evident in the current condition of downtown parks will need to be addressed. The design quality, programming and levels of management and maintenance of open spaces are today inconsistent with the transformations seen in other downtowns across the country. It is only recently that Austin's downtown has become a desirable place to live, so investments of scarce resources in parkland dedication, improvement and maintenance have understandably been minimal. However, the last decade has been transformational in Austin's Downtown. Its success as a place now hinges on the ability to create a public realm and a downtown park system that can be enjoyed by the whole community, while promoting viable and dense, residential, commercial and hotel development. Although some investments in parks are underway, and some supportive infrastructure for maintenance and programming are in place, the Parks and Open Space Master Plan will need to address the following impediments:

- Underfunding of capital and ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M)
- Limited staffing to focus on Downtown's unique needs within the City's Parks and Recreation Department's (PARD) large scope of responsibility
- Limited stewardship of parks
- Lack of design quality
- Lack of planning in concert with surrounding properties

SUMMARY OF MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

General Policy Priorities

Reduce the impact of the homeless population on parks and open spaces. Increase homeless services and administer these outside of the public park system.

Increase the range of activities, amenities, facilities and spaces available to the public in the parks.

- ***Allow "busking" (licensed performers) throughout Downtown's public parks, open spaces and streets, and***
- ***Increase funding for cultural programming in the public parks that could be administered by the City's Arts in Public Places Program (AIPP).***

Create new vending "pads" or spaces within parks and even in parking lanes adjacent to the downtown squares for permanent or mobile food and drink sales.

Allow long-term concession agreements (20- 30 year terms) with vendors in order to enable them to make larger capital investments in their physical facilities.

Commit both capital and O&M investments in Downtown public open spaces as a near-term, city-wide priority, starting with the ten City-owned, downtown public parks. Assure sufficient capital and O&M budgets to achieve the high-quality and sustainable design, construction and maintenance of parks and open spaces.

Increase PARD's annual base O&M funding in the General Fund for existing downtown parks from approximately $7,000/acre to $10,000 - $20,000/acre, as an ongoing fund to be increased as appropriate to the level of capital investments made in individual parks through time.

Provide capital improvement funding to PARD for both master plan capital investments for downtown parks, through a bond issuance if General Fund allocations cannot be made.

Budget O&M funds for redeveloped signature parks at levels reflecting 7% – 10% of their capital cost.

Increase solicitation of corporate and private sponsorships and donations. Utilize City's existing Facility Naming Policy as a way to encourage this, but ensure that contributions are significant to warrant naming, and ensure that an O&M endowment fund for the named facility/artwork/space/etc. is also set aside at the time of the contribution.

As opportunities arise, consider the acquisition of public parkland, or the private development of a publicly-accessible open space within a two-to-three block walk from any point in Downtown. These new open spaces could be funded through parkland dedication fees or incentivized through the proposed Downtown Density Bonus Program. With the addition of two open spaces located in the following areas, all downtown public open spaces would be within 800 feet of downtown properties:

- ***The vicinity of the 17th/Lavaca/Guadalupe commercial node, and***
- ***The vicinity of the original "Northeast Square" (e.g., the GSA's plaza between the Thornberry and Pickle buildings).***

Fees and Assessments

Revise the Parkland Dedication Ordinance to apply to all commercial properties in Downtown, but perhaps at lower required levels than that applied to residential uses.

Require that parkland dedication fees or lands contributed in Downtown are invested within Downtown, or possibly even more locally: within the DAP district where the contributing property is located.

Increase event and concession fees appropriately and assure that these revenues return to PARD. Increase these fees as improvements to parks and facilities are made.

Consider assessing property owners surrounding a public park through the creation of a business improvement district (BID), especially as these parks are improved.

Consider increasing property taxes city-wide or within the Downtown to create a special parks fund set-aside for parks that could be used for capital and/or O&M costs.

Consider levying a city-wide parks "user fee" that could be paid as part of the City of Austin utility bill that could support O&M as well as capital improvements for parks, city-wide. Set aside an appropriately ample percentage for downtown parks, as these are used by all City of Austin residents.

The DAA should consider increasing the PID rate and/or instituting a graduated system that covers more property uses, rather than commercial only. A one-penny increase in the current 10-cent per $100 valuation assessment would generate $200,000 per year that could be earmarked for parks.

Governance and Management

PARD should continue to serve as the primary governance and management entity for downtown parks.

Enhance partnerships with local business organizations and non-profits interested in improving the quality and activation of downtown parks. In some cases bringing these sources to bear depends on shared management arrangements; in other cases, the entities could simply support PARD in managing parks, providing programming, maintenance and even capital improvements. Austin Parks Foundation (APF), The Trail Foundation (TTF) and the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) are examples of existing organizations whose respective roles with downtown parks could be enhanced.

Consider establishing a special purpose entity (or entities, i.e., one per park) capable of producing or attracting supplemental funding and providing management capacity that may be beyond the scope of PARD. Entities such as downtown development corporations, business improvement districts (BIDs), local government corporations (LGCs) and conservancies each have access to financial resources that are not as readily available to municipal parks departments, and

which can execute capital projects and manage and program open spaces in ways that complement the resources of government agencies. As part of the DAP, the creation of such an entity is being considered to facilitate the implementation of the phased set of recommendations and improvements, so this entity could be charged with implementing and managing the priority signature park or parks.

Provide funding to PARD for an executive-level, full-time staff person whose mission is to implement the Parks and Open Space Master Plan portion of the DAP. This person would procure and manage consultants hired to implement individual park improvement programs, as well as those hired to develop a way-finding, signage and parks furnishings system and plan. In addition, this executive would work with other City staff and the City Managers Office (and with a future central city development corporation) to effect the various ordinance and policy changes recommended by the DAP.

Priority Projects

Develop a system of parks-identified furnishings and way-finding and interpretative signage that assists in creating a new and positive brand/image for downtown parks. Build on the efforts of The Trail Foundation and coordinate this system with the overall Downtown way-finding system needed for the entire Downtown.

Through stakeholder and community participation and PARD leadership, develop design and engineering plans for the following, highest priority public parks:

- ***Waller Creek Greenway, including Palm Park and Waterloo Park***
- ***Brush Square***
- ***Wooldridge Square***

FUNDING PRIORITIES

If the negative image of downtown parks is to be reversed and if Austin is to make a palpable change in the way parks look and are perceived and used, additional funding needs to be allocated to their upkeep and capital improvement. This is critical for attracting a constituency of stewards that will justify and attract further investment. The City should consider an annual PARD downtown parks O&M budget in the order of $615,000 ($15,000/acre), which would be sufficient to maintain the downtown parks at a level in keeping with their existing levels of improvement.

In terms of capital improvements, the City should give the highest priority to the transformational improvement of the Waller Creek corridor, including Waterloo and Palm parks, which together could support re-investment and redevelopment in the eastern half of Downtown. The capital cost of these improvements is estimated at approximately $40 million. Beyond this significant improvement project, enhancement of the two historic squares, Wooldridge and Brush, should be given the next highest priority, which is estimated at an additional one-time investment of $8 million.

In the short term leading up to these capital improvements, efforts should be made by the City, APF, DAA and others to provide both programming and modest, incremental capital improvements to the open spaces in an effort raise the consciousness of Austin's citizenry on their value, both now and in the future as they are fully redeveloped.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. What is the purpose of this master plan?

This Parks and Open Space Master Plan is intended to articulate a community-supported vision for a downtown parks and open space system that will guide public and private investment and management of individual parks and the system as a whole. The master plan strives to:

- ***Set aspirations and articulate community goals.*** In addition to an overall vision, the Master Plan describes how the open spaces of Downtown can contribute to Austin's quality of life, its image and its growth. A series of meetings during the master planning process has helped to articulate many of these aspirations and goals.

- ***Develop a general vision for each downtown park, appropriate to its specific location and function within the open space system.*** The Master Plan categorizes each downtown park according to its type – including the citywide-serving parks, the linear greenways, the more local-serving neighborhood parks, the special historic squares – and articulates a vision for each park to serve that function.

- ***Create a phased implementation plan that establishes priorities and budgets.*** The Master Plan suggests prioritization of capital investments that will fulfill a critical objective of demonstrating success and establishing momentum, and sets an overall capital and operations and maintenance (O&M) budget target for a revitalized downtown parks system.

- ***Establish governance, funding and management mechanisms to support the long-term vitality of parks.*** The master plan recommends a multi-entity system, led by the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department (PARD), which will take full advantage of opportunities for additional capital and operations and maintenance funding and will offer alternatives for park development and management that integrate the parks seamlessly with Austin's overall Downtown growth and development.

- ***Promote advocacy and leadership for downtown parks.*** The master plan identifies the groups that have been critical to the Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) to date and that can continue to play an even greater role in implementation of the vision,

Parks contribute to a City's quality of life, image and growth.

as well as proposing other governance and management structures that may be more appropriate for highly amenitized urban parks.

B. How does the Parks and Open Space Master Plan relate to the Downtown Austin Plan?

This Parks and Open Space Master Plan is being prepared as an integral part of the Downtown Austin Plan and will inform the policy recommendations of the overall Plan. The Parks and Open Space Master Plan is also being informed by a broader view of downtown goals, including the need to bolster Downtown's competitive position in the region to support compact and livable high-density development that provides an alternative to sprawl, to transform street rights-of-way into multi-modal corridors that extend and complement the open space system, and to make Downtown a place where everyone is welcome.

The full Parks and Open Space Master Plan document will be appended to the DAP and will be summarized in a chapter of the overall plan. The Implementation recommendations of the Master Plan, including funding, governance, phasing and priorities will be closely coordinated with those of the larger plan. The DAP provides direction on areas integral with the success of the downtown parks and open space system, including: the role and design of streets which provide critical connectivity; the form and treatment of buildings which frame and activate public spaces; the preservation of historic resources which gives meaning and identity to the area; and the organizational and governance structures needed to implement and manage open space improvements on an ongoing basis.

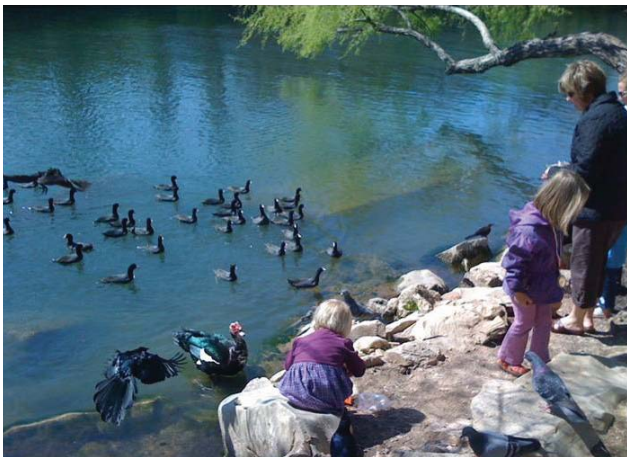
The Downtown Austin Plan provides recommendations on the design of streets, which should serve as extensions of the open space.

The preparation of the Master Plan has involved the community as part of the DAP process, including stakeholder interviews, focus group work sessions, and Town Hall meetings - one of which focused specifically on the downtown park system. In addition, a Parks Leadership Group, comprised of civic leaders, open space and parks activists, key City staff and non-profit and downtown entities (e.g., Austin Parks Foundation, The Trail Foundation, Downtown Austin Alliance, Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association) was convened to help develop the overall vision and planning principles found in the Master Plan.

C. Why are downtown parks and open spaces important?

In recent years the function of urban parks in many North American cities has changed. Leading cities have undertaken ambitious projects that have placed parks at the center of their downtown revitalization efforts, fueling substantial residential, commercial and retail development. These world-class spaces serve

as amenities for residents and workers and activate Downtown during workdays, evenings and weekends. Downtown parks in cities across the country with similar quality of life and economic growth goals as Austin have become well known for their high quality spaces, innovative programming and high standards of upkeep. These parks may be large, signature attractions that have seen substantial capital investment, (e.g., Chicago's Millennium Park, Houston's Discovery Green) or revitalizations of smaller downtown-serving parks, such as Patriots Square Park in Phoenix and Post Office Square in Boston.



Parks can provide connections to nature in an urban area.

Regardless of their scale, these examples reveal what Austin can accomplish with a focused investment of resources, time and energy. This Master Plan is intended to provide the road map for achieving a great downtown parks and open space system that can:

- **Unite a diverse community,** by connecting and serving existing and new neighborhoods alike – strengthening the linear parkway system along Lady Bird Lake, Waller and Shoal creeks, and by creating new recreational opportunities that make the Downtown a destination for all of Austin's neighborhoods.

- **Provide connections to nature,** by taking advantage of Downtown's proximity to the lake and creeks, which offer Austinites a diversity of environmental settings and a contemplative escape from urban life without having to leave the city.

- **Support the vision of a compact mixed-use Downtown** with an interconnected system of public places that contributes to a livable and memorable experience and provides a welcomed counterpoint to dense urban living.

- **Make the city more competitive** by offering quality of life destinations for residents and workers, combining active recreation areas, opportunities for passive enjoyment, cafés and cultural life and outdoor entertainment spaces.

- **Promote economic development and increased property values,** by coordinating open space improvements as a strong catalyst for residential and office demand, an effect that has been demonstrated across the country.

D. What is the vision for downtown parks and open spaces?

A high-quality downtown parks system – combining large signature destinations, smaller downtown spaces serving workers and new residents, and neighborhood parks – can promote economic growth for Downtown and reinforce Austin's goal as a vibrant mixed-use community. By prioritizing parks and open spaces within the Downtown Austin Plan, Austin has acknowledged that the public realm is, and will be, both an important amenity for businesses and residents and a highly visible aspect of the city's identity. Through focus group work sessions with community leaders and open space proponents, a preliminary vision statement has emerged:

Austin's downtown parks and open spaces will augment the city's identity and bolster its economy by creating signature, high-quality places that serve the community's diverse population, connect it to nature and provide it with unique opportunities for active and passive recreation and entertainment. This will be achieved through strategic public, private and non-profit investments in park and open space improvements and new parks, synchronized with a high standard of programming and upkeep.

E. What are the challenges in achieving this vision?

To achieve this vision, a range of challenges evident in the current condition of downtown parks will need to be addressed. The design quality, programming and levels of management and maintenance of open spaces are, as of yet, inconsistent with the transformations seen in other downtowns across the country. It is only recently that Downtown has become a desirable place to live, so investments of scarce resources in parkland dedication, improvement and maintenance have understandably been minimal. However, the last decade has been transformational in Austin's Downtown. Its success as a place now hinges on the ability to create a public realm and a downtown park system that can be enjoyed by the whole community, while promoting viable and dense, residential, commercial and hotel development. Although some investments in parks are underway, and some supportive infrastructure for maintenance and programming are in place, the Parks and Open Space Master Plan will need to address the following impediments:

Downtown Austin has seen substantial downtown real estate development and has become a desirable place to live.

Underfunding of capital and ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M): There have been few signature capital improvements made to enhance Austin's downtown park system. Although the recent creation of

Butler Park, in conjunction with the Palmer Events Center and the Long Performing Arts Center, has helped to reinforce the Lady Bird Lake Greenway as the City's and Downtown's premier open space, there has been little investment in other downtown parks and open spaces. Compared with other American cities, Austin is in the lower half of capital funding and the lower third of O&M funding per acre of parks. As discussed below, Austin spends approximately $6,700 per acre on the upkeep of its downtown parks, a figure much less than is spent on signature parks in other downtowns across the country, such as Houston's Discovery Green, where three million dollars per year is spent on O&M.

Limited stewardship of parks: Helping to explain the underfunding challenge in part is the lack of active, multi-entity stewardship of Austin's downtown parks. The transformation of signature urban parks in American cities in recent years has been achieved through a pattern of robust public, private and non-profit investment. A plethora of special development corporations, well-funded business, institutional and philanthropic entities, conservancies, trusts and friends groups have sprung up to channel new funding sources and provide additional execution and management capacity. Austin has some of these institutions in place, and they have grown in recent years – the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA), the Austin Parks Foundation (APF), The (Lady Bird Lake) Trail Foundation (TTF), among others – but they lack the capital and operating funding base and the coordination to oversee dynamic growth of the entire downtown parks system.

Lack of design quality: Historically, Austin has prioritized only a very few parks to receive the level of attention necessary to create a great public space, both in terms of hiring top park designers as well as appropriating the budgets necessary to construct high-quality open spaces. In addition, only two or three of Downtown's 17 publicly-accessible open spaces are well-designed places that complement the overall open space system. Austin's new generation of downtown parks and open spaces deserves a much higher-quality approach.

Lack of planning for open space together with its surrounding areas: While Austin has seen substantial downtown real estate development in the last decade, and Downtown continues to be characterized by unique, attractive historic architecture, inadequate care has been given to creating positive relationships between buildings and the public realm, and to adjacent open spaces. As new construction occurs and older buildings are rehabilitated, the manner in which they frame abutting open space must be more carefully considered.

The condition of most Downtown parks and open spaces is lacking.

F. What are the guiding principles to achieving great public spaces?

Parks and public open spaces require careful planning, programming and design. It is not enough to provide real estate for open space: a successful public space must be accompanied by the highest levels of thoughtful and purposeful design and the institutional and financing structures to sustain it through time. The following ten principles provide a basis for the design and implementation of great public parks and open spaces.

1. **Meaning and Significance:** Build on the positive existing patterns of use within and around the open space, and celebrate the distinct history, culture and identity of the place.

2. **Attractions and Destinations:** Create multiple activities and features that can attract a diversity of people and establish a constituency of "stewards".

3. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Allow the space to respond to daily, weekly and seasonal fluctuations over time.

4. **Positive Edges/"Frame":** Promote a form and pattern of development at the edges of the public space that provide positive activity and spatial definition.

5. **Connections:** Design streets and pathways as an extension of the public space itself.

6. **Design Excellence:** Procure the highest levels of design professionalism capable of creating successful, world-class public spaces.

7. **Public Art and Artful Design:** Introduce public art that raises community consciousness and reinforces an authentic sense of place.

8. **Green Design:** Promote the highest levels of sustainable design and construction.

9. **Strong Management:** Establish appropriate governance that can coordinate successful programming, maintenance and security.

10. **Sustainable Financing:** Secure adequate levels of funding to assure ongoing high quality maintenance and operations of the open space.

The Ten Principles Further Elaborated:

1. **Meaning and Significance:** ***Build on the positive existing patterns of use within and around the open space, and celebrate the distinct history, culture and identity of the place.*** Since downtown parks are often part of a city's historic fabric, they can be an excellent "media" through which to reveal and transmit the history of a community in a meaningful way. Downtown parks can be designed to make visible and palpable a connection to place, culture and history that has the power to resonate on a deep level with both residents and visitors alike. People innately want to inhabit and enjoy such unique and authentic places and learn the stories they have to tell. Great public spaces also give us the all-too-rare opportunity to be present with one another as part of the greater community, actively becoming part of the history of a place, and satisfying the desire to connect with one another.

Quincy Market, Boston was built in the 1800s and remains one of the top tourist attractions today.

For over 250 years, Faneuil Hall Marketplace has played an integral role in the life of Boston residents.

Cincinnati reclaimed its historic Fountain Square with major renovations between 2004 and 2006.

The historic Auction Oaks in Republic Square have been nurtured back to health, and a deck will be built to protect the trees and provide a gathering space.

2. **Attractions and Destinations:** ***Create multiple activities and features that can attract a diversity of people and establish a constituency of "stewards."*** Successful public open spaces welcome all ages, all income levels, all backgrounds of people. While certain features in parks may be oriented to a specific user group, for example, to children with a playscape, or to seniors with a chess table, other users should always feel that there is something for them, as both a first-time visitor and a regular user, even if this is simply being with others in a vibrant public setting. The more that special areas of amenities within parks can successfully attract and operate across age, gender, race and socioeconomic boundaries, the better. A stepped amphitheater for events seating can become an engaging playscape for kids. It can also serve as a great place to eat lunch, read a book or hold an outdoor classroom. A sculpture may also be something for a child to climb and explore tactically. Food offerings, especially affordable ones, attract a broad spectrum of people at many different times of day, while also allowing extended stays in the park. These can take the form of kiosks, vans that may park on the street next to a public open space, or in some cases, a fine dining restaurant. Spaces for spontaneous art, performances and music can enliven a park and provide a unique experience. A park or open space with broad appeal will inspire a sense of caring ownership among its users, in effect an identifiable constituency that can help to ensure the continued viability of the space.

A stepped amphitheater can be used as an event space as well as an engaging play area for kids, a lunch spot and/or an outdoor classroom.

Food vendors can attract a broad range of people throughout the day.

3. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** ***Allow the space to respond to daily, weekly and seasonal fluctuations over time.*** Just as attractions and destinations should be able to appeal to a diversity of people, public open spaces, and their sub-spaces, must be able to be used in a variety of ways. While a "great lawn" may be needed for the 2,000-person concert, it should also gracefully accommodate various activities including impromptu frisbee tossing, a picnic, an outdoor classroom, a dog-walk, tai-chi, sunning and napping. The scale of such a great lawn should not impede its use by smaller-scaled, day-to-day activities, which are critical to the parks success when a large event is not being conducted. In the longer term, parks and open spaces should evolve through time, adapting themselves as needed to new needs and changing community interest. It is important, therefore, to ensure that public parks are not overly programmed, and that they favor multiple rather than exclusive uses.

Bryant Park is an elegant outdoor room multiple uses.

Washington Square, San Francisco can serve as an intimate space and large gathering area.

4. **Positive Edges/"Frame":** ***Promote a form and pattern of development at the edges of the public space that provide positive activity and spatial definition.*** Ideally, a park or public space should feel like an outdoor room, clearly defined and enclosed by the frame of the surrounding buildings and their uses. Active uses (retail, civic, hotel, office, residential, etc.) can generate both activity in and around - and eyes upon - the open space. Buildings located along public spaces should be required to openly address the space, with major building entrances, lobbies, outdoor terraces, stoops, etc.

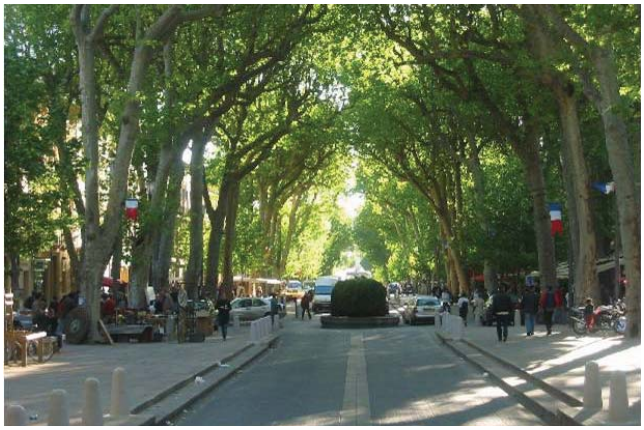
Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland is known as the City's "living room."

This piazza in Verona, Italy is clearly defined by the surrounding buildings and cafes.

Place des Vosges, Paris is framed by historic housefronts now used as residences, art galleries and restaurants.

This Savannah, Georgia square is surrounded by historic houses that face the square.

5. **Connections:** ***Design streets and pathways as an extension of the public space itself, with generous and accessible pathways, shade, activities, way-finding, seating and other amenities.*** Downtown parks and open spaces should be developed as a system that clearly links one to another by the city street system. Implementing an attractive, downtown-wide way-finding system coordinated with transit stops and the public pathway system is important in expressing and reinforcing connections between public open spaces and other key destinations in the Downtown. Ideally, "parks-connector" streets should themselves be treated as "Green Streets", providing a continuous canopy of shade trees, as well as more ornamental and colorful landscape elements. In this way, these tree-lined and specially landscaped streets themselves assist in way-finding.



Cours de Mirabeaux, Aix-en-Provence serves as an extension of the public open space and is one of the most popular and lively places in the town.

The downtown pedestrian mall in Charlottesville, Virginia acts as an urban park.

The porticos of Bologna, Italy connect the piazzas of the central city.

Las Ramblas in Barcelona is a tree-lined pedestrian mall that connects Placa Catalunya and the waterfront.

6. **Design Excellence:** ***Secure the highest levels of design professionalism capable of creating successful, world-class public spaces.*** The procurement of the best design team available for each park is one of the most critical steps in achieving the vision of a high quality downtown park system. The best design teams will both learn from and guide the community through a programming and design process, which is a critical foundation for successful park design and operation. It is important to choose park designers with clear experience in these community processes and with depth of experience in the design and implementation of urban parks of the type concerned. Finally, it is critical to secure appropriate budgets, both for their design and construction.

The design excellence of Bryant Park transformed a once dangerous and degraded park into a vibrant and successful open space (Hanna/Olin Ltd).

The High Line in New York City is a mile-and-a-half-long elevated park that exemplifies high quality design (James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro).

Community involvement is an important aspect of achieving high quality park design.

7. **Public Art and Artful Design:** ***Introduce public art that raises community consciousness and reinforces an authentic sense of place*****.** Parks and public open spaces not only provide great settings for individual artworks, but the spaces and facilities themselves should be conceived artfully. Ideally, permanent public artworks, such as sculpture, should be conceived with respect to the spatial design of the open space, where it can create a dynamic counterpoint to the space, or where it can be more integrated into the space, as appropriate to the work itself and to its setting. The park design itself should be approached with an eye toward creating interest and beauty with the arrangement of the various elements and facilities, such as an events lawn, a grove or allee of trees, a pond or runnel, a seating area, a shade structure, etc. The design of functional and even utilitarian elements, such as a bench or seat wall, a drinking fountain, rainwater collection, etc., is an opportunity for the park designer or artists on the design team to be encouraged to take these elements beyond the ordinary, to extend and enhance the human experience of the space. Ideally, artists should be part of the park design team. It is in this way, public art and artful design will have the best possibility of being integral, heightening their power and meaning to the public.

Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle is an artful design that transformed a nine-acre industrial site into a beautiful art park.

Millennium Park in Chicago features work of world-renowned architects, planners, artists and designers, including the Lurie Gardens (above) and Anish Kapoor's 'Cloud Gate' sculpture (below).

8. **Green Design:** ***Promote the highest levels of sustainable design and construction,*** including the use of native, low-water use plant materials, low-impact development techniques in stormwater management (rain gardens, bio-swales, vegetative filter strips, etc.), rainwater and solar collection, green roofs and other techniques of green-building construction. Further, building, hardscape and landscape materials should be of the highest quality and durability in order to minimize maintenance and replacement costs. The green design of the parks and open spaces should be made evident to users in order to foster a culture of sustainability. This could include interpretative exhibits, interactive elements, public art, demonstration elements, etc., to educate the public about natural ecosystems and the importance of sustainable design.

Crissy Field in San Francisco underwent a major ecological transformation (Hargreaves Associates).

This rain garden in Seattle is an interpretive playground that describes the natural processes of water.

The Crissy Field restoration project included removal of the airfields and planting over 100,000 native plants.

Tanner Springs Park in Portland includes wetland restoration and flowing runnels characteristic of this low area near the Willamette River (Atlelier Dreiseitl and Greenworks).

9. **Strong Management:** ***Establish appropriate governance that can coordinate successful programming, maintenance and security.*** Many cities that have successfully transformed their urban parks have found it necessary to modify the conventional management system so that they can access additional funding sources; coordinate with other public infrastructure and private development projects; and provide supplemental programming, maintenance and security. Parks such as Central Park, Millennium Park and Discovery Green have developed innovative models that are successfully supplementing the role of municipal parks departments, while retaining basic governance, rule-setting, and often capital and maintenance responsibility within the municipal agency. A range of models exists and should be tailored to potential funding sources, capacity needs, and organizational mission, as discussed more comprehensively in the Implementation section of this Master Plan.

Central Park is managed by the Central Park Conservancy, a non-profit organization that has invested more than $500 million into the park since 1980. The Conservancy provides 85% of Central Park's $27 million annual operating budget and is responsible for all basic care of the Park.

The Discovery Green Conservancy manages this new park in Houston. The Conservancy was responsible for the park's development and now operates the park.

10. **Sustainable Financing:** ***Secure adequate levels of funding to assure ongoing high quality maintenance and operations of the open space.*** Building the funding capacity to transform a downtown park system is a complex endeavor, and over time, the cost of operation and maintenance is much more substantial than the original capital investment. While local public revenues remain the essential component of a strong parks system, additional sources of funds should always be pursued in order to achieve maximum leverage. A combination of one-time and ongoing funding from a variety of public, private and non-profit sources can be used to ensure ongoing, high-quality maintenance and operations of downtown open spaces.

Fountain Square in Cincinnati has an annual operation and maintenance cost of $425,000 for safety, cleaning, landscaping, utilities, repairs, maintenance and capitol improvements.

The City of Houston and the Discovery Green Conservancy each provide $750,000 per year for operation and maintenance.

The Friends of Post Office Square, Inc in Boston earns revenue from the parking garage beneath the park to cover expenses for the garage and park.

III. CURRENT CONDITIONS

A. What does the downtown parks and open space system include?

The total public open space system of Downtown is comprised of:

1. About 112 acres of **dedicated, public parkland** under State, University of Texas and City of Austin ownership;
2. About six acres of **publicly-accessible open spaces** including plazas that may be publicly or privately-owned, but are not dedicated parkland; and, in addition,
3. About 374 acres of **public rights-of-ways**, the street system.

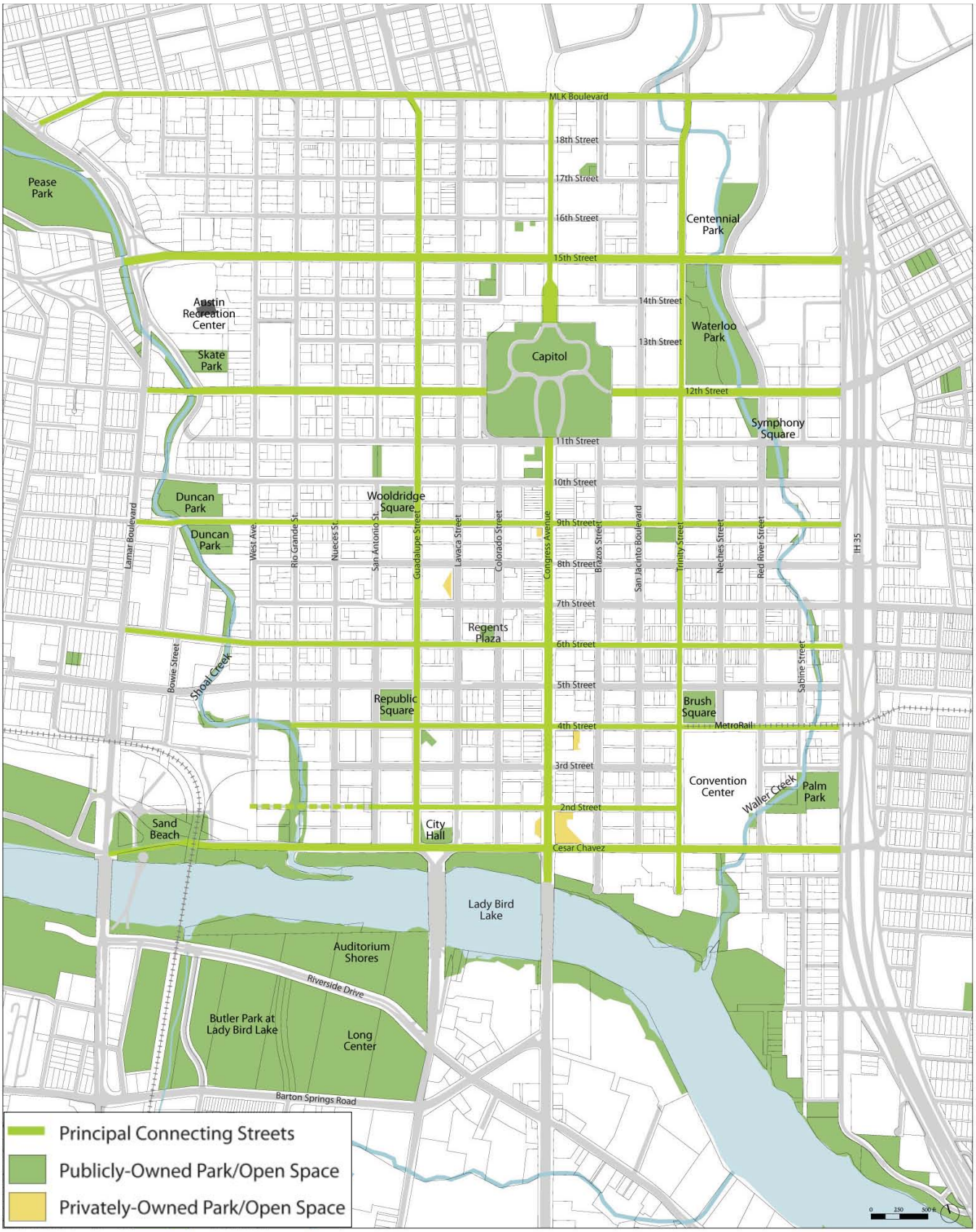
Ideally, these three kinds of public space cohere to create the healthy outdoor framework around which buildings and uses are organized and oriented. Today, only a small subset of these three types of public space is accomplishing this role in the emerging downtown open space system. A true open space system has yet to be realized, although downtown Austin has "good bones" to build on, particularly with the river frontage, the two urban creek corridors and the existing set of public parks, historic squares and grid of streets.

There are six key types of parks and open spaces in the Downtown, each performing a different function or role within the parks and open space system. They are:

1. **Linear Greenways,** consisting of Lady Bird Lake, Shoal Creek, Waller Creek parks. These greenways provide both recreational, health and social opportunities, as well as bike and pedestrian transportation linkages into Downtown. They are the "lungs" of the city and the parks that serve to connect people to nature in the most direct manner. As such, they should be maintained as the predominantly naturalistic environments they are today.

2. **City-Wide Parks,** consisting of Capitol Square, Waterloo Park, House Park Skate Park and Austin Recreation Center and Palm Park. These parks function to bring people from all over, to city and regional events and celebrations. Typically these are larger parks than downtown neighborhood-serving or urban parks. They are typically characterized by large, flat and open expanses of land that can accommodate such events. Palm Park, although smaller than most city-wide serving parks, can be placed in this category

Lady Bird Lake is Downtown's premier open space and one of the region's most beloved open spaces.



Parks, Open Space and Principal Connecting Streets

because of the larger role it plays as part of the Waller Creek Greenway and its connection to and potential use by the Convention Center.

3. **Neighborhood Parks,** consisting of Duncan Park and UT's Centennial Park. These parks generally function to provide recreational opportunities for a specific residential neighborhood, and thus are more family-focused, with playgrounds, picnicking, swimming, tennis or basketball, as well as unprogrammed open space areas. Duncan Park's neighborhood is still emerging, with many new apartments and condos nearby, while Centennial Park's "neighborhood" is really the southern part of the UT Campus, particularly the School of Nursing.

4. **Historic Squares,** consisting of Wooldridge Square, Republic Square and Brush Square. Waller's 1839 town plan, with its four squares placed in the orthogonal grid, was inspired by William Penn's utopian vision for Philadelphia. Each of these one-block squares was planned to include a key civic function, and they were intended to be central gathering places in the new city. Today the three squares that remain generally function as both local neighborhood-serving parks, as well as City-wide open spaces. However, they are not living up to their potential as gathering places that function well on a daily basis, nor for special events.

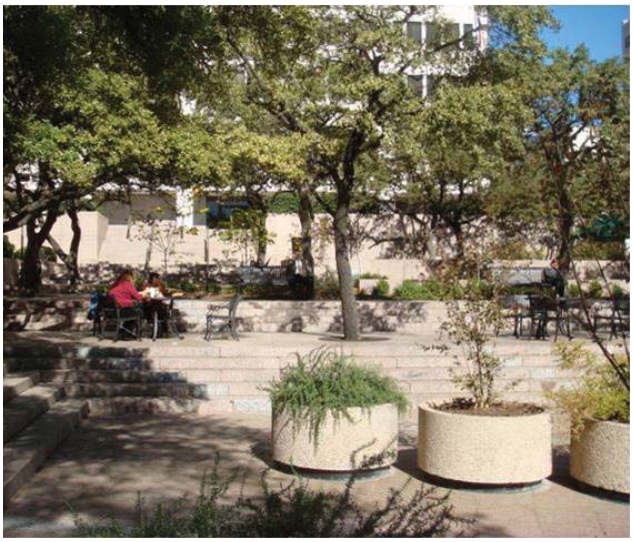
5. **Gardens and Plazas,** consisting of City Hall Plaza, Regents Plaza, the Old Bakery, Symphony Square, Pickle Building Plaza, and others. In all, there are 17 publicly-accessible open spaces, comprising about eight acres throughout Downtown, both on publicly and privately-owned land, mostly taking the form of plazas and courtyards. These spaces have the opportunity to provide smaller-scale outdoor places that provide a welcome break in the continuous built edge of city blocks typical of a downtown environment. The additional livability that even these small spaces can bring to a downtown is immense. (In addition, there is a strong community desire, as articulated by both the Parks and Recreation Board and the Design Commission, to encourage the creation of these smaller public open spaces

The Capitol Grounds (left) serve as a place for public gatherings. Republic Square (right) has the potential to be a central gathering place in downtown Austin.

as part of new developments. It is proposed as part of the DAP Downtown Density Bonus Program that developments including such high-quality, well-designed public spaces be rewarded with increased density and/or height.)

6. **Streets,** and public rights-of-way constitute about 35% of the overall land area Downtown, so should be considered and treated as a vital part of the public open space system - beyond their role in moving vehicles. Streets and public paths establish the way we see and experience Downtown, and the way we understand how its different spaces are linked together. In the Downtown, particularly, streets should be "Great Streets," that is streetscapes that provide shade trees and generous sidewalks, furnishings and way-finding, public art and social interaction. As reinforced through many stakeholder and community meetings, developing a network of Great Streets is paramount in changing the image and identity of Downtown to align with the City's vision of a world-class Downtown- one that cares about its public spaces. The open space system should be reinforced through the "green treatment" of certain Great Streets that perform a central role in connecting the parks and open spaces of Downtown, creating "ribbons" of sustainable and pedestrian- and bike-friendly corridors. These green, connecting streets should integrate well-maintained vegetated areas and should be designed to minimize stormwater runoff by integrating landscape features that capture stormwater runoff and allow it to infiltrate naturally into the ground.

Regents Plaza (left) is an example of a successful downtown plaza. The green, connecting streets (right) serve as a visual amenity and provide environmental benefits through stormwater management.



B. Are there enough public open spaces in Downtown, and are they in the right places?

The City of Austin owns about 23.4 acres parkland per 1,000 residents, which is a healthy quantity. By comparison, Portland has 24.5 acres, Seattle has 10.4 acres and San Francisco has 7.0 acres/1,000 residents. Only about one-third of Austin's acreage, however, is in "designed" parks, with amenities such as playgrounds, picnicking areas, sports fields, meadows, etc. The majority of the open space is either undeveloped or considered conservation land. In terms of sheer quantity of parkland, Austin has 16.3 per cent of its overall land area in parkland (including water quality lands), ranking it very high relative to other cities, as the average for all of the US cities compared by Trust for Public Land (TPL) is only 9.9 per cent.

No clear rules-of-thumbs or metrics are prevalent that set goals for appropriate land areas for public parks in a downtown setting, however. If one takes Austin's parkland dedication requirement as a metric, which requires five acres for every 1,000 new residents proposed in a new development or subdivision, Austin's Downtown appears to have a reasonable quantity of land. Simply applying Austin's Parkland Dedication Ordinance formula for the Downtown and using the oft-stated but informal goal of 25,000 residents by 2025, this would yield a "need" for 125 acres of parkland. Austin's Downtown already has about 114 acres of parkland, and a total of about 120 acres, if one adds publicly-accessible open spaces to this. The problem in downtown Austin is clearly not the quantity of parks and open spaces, it is first and foremost a quality issue and, secondly, an issue of its distribution or location.

These parkland dedication goals are broad brush ones, intended to maintain a healthy amount of parkland on the city-wide scale – primarily providing space for large-area, active recreational uses, as well as for large, "non-amenitized" parkland serving for habitat and ecological preservation. These goals are not as applicable for downtown urban parks, which tend to be smaller in size and more highly-programmed and amenitized than their suburban counterparts. Downtown parks will not typically provide the kinds of large open recreational and environmental open spaces, but still should serve to connect people to nature, people to places and perhaps most importantly, people to one another. What is more critical in developing a downtown parks and open space system is ensuring a good distribution of and location for parks and open spaces, connecting them to one another and to key destinations, achieving the right mix of activities within and around parks and ensuring they are well maintained and programmed.

Portland, Oregon has set a goal of having a neighborhood park within a 10 to 15-minute walk of every city resident and a regional park within a 30-minute walk of every resident. As mentioned, there are no specific metrics for downtown parks, but a reasonable and even laudable goal would be for a park or significant, publicly-accessible open space to be located within a five-minute walk of all places in Downtown, or a distance of about 800 feet. By doing a "service area analysis" of the Austin's downtown parks and open space system, there are only two areas of the

Areas Greater than 800 Feet from a Downtown Park or Open Space

Downtown that are out of this range of accessibility: a large area in the northwest downtown, straddling parts of the Judges Hill, Northwest and Uptown/Capitol districts; and a smaller area to the southeast of the Capitol. (See "Areas Greater than 800 Feet from a Downtown Park or Open Space" map to left.) As part of the DAP stakeholder meetings and analysis related to downtown district planning, these deficiencies were already identified and two strategies recommended to address these gaps, as stated below:

1. Create a public open space in the vicinity of the Seventeenth and Lavaca/ Guadalupe historic commercial node that might take the form of a shaded plaza, supporting neighborhood cafes and pubs, as well as the emerging arts district there. This could take the form of a density bonus on private land, or the City could acquire property in this area to dedicate as parkland; and

2. In the long term, (e.g., in 25 – 30 years), the City could pursue the acquisition of the original "Northeast Square" for conversion back to a public open space which could become an anchor for the redevelopment of the surrounding properties. Today, the square is owned and occupied by the First Baptist Church, representatives of which have indicated that they have no interest in selling the property. Acquisition of the open space would require a willing seller, and any redevelopment of the area should include a new site for the church, perhaps with its strong orientation to a restored square. In lieu of this restoration concept, the City could consider new parkland dedication in this vicinity and/or improvements to the GSA's plaza between the Thornberry and Pickle buildings.

With these two additional open spaces, the downtown system would achieve a fairly ideal distribution of parks and open spaces, serving future residents, employees and "strollers" more equitably.

C. What activities are currently in downtown parks and open spaces and what is missing?

Although Austin's downtown parks support a range of recreational and passive activities, they do not promote the kind of activities consistent with Downtown's still-evolving role as a dense mixed-use district, with a concentrated population of residents, office workers and visitors. Lady Bird Lake provides excellent opportunities for jogging, walking and recreational biking, but there are few good places in Downtown to sit and watch people or to enjoy a brown-bag lunch. (UT's Regents Plaza is a notable exception in this regard.) In spite of a growing resident population, there is virtually no family-oriented park space or playground within walking distance of the numerous condominiums and apartments that have been developed in Downtown. Although there are several parks which accommodate large programmed events (e.g., Waterloo Park), there are no great spaces that are suited to spontaneous gatherings or celebrations. While the historic squares

would seem to be obvious candidates for these activities, they are not structured or designed in a way that can easily or naturally support them. Brush Square is largely covered with buildings and a fenced surface parking lot; and Wooldridge Square has steep topography and inaccessible pathways. Republic Square is in the process of being upgraded and can play this role in the very near future.

Many downtown parks have been treated as "excess real estate", expedient places for displaced historic buildings, or areas to dispense needed social services. As a result, many parks have no regular users that can be their "stewards" or advocates, and no pattern of daily activity has emerged: many parks have been taken over by the homeless population who tend to occupy spaces in the city that are unused or uncared for. Few of the 17 publicly-accessible open spaces in Downtown are making a positive contribution to the downtown system, either. They tend to provide a place for employees of that building development, rather than having a welcoming presence to the general public. Often these "plazas" are no more than a smoking patio. As a strong constituency of employees and particularly downtown residents emerge, however, the demand for high-quality, public open spaces is being voiced more loudly than ever before.

During a series of individual park stakeholder meetings focused on the City-controlled parks, participants developed ideas about the role of individual parks, as well as activities and amenities lacking in the overall downtown system. While ideas for individual parks are described in Chapter III of this Master Plan, the following activities were felt to be lacking in the overall downtown system:

- Children's playgrounds and other family-friendly spaces and activities
- Water play, fountains
- Swimming facilities
- Off-leash dog areas
- Community gardens
- Botanical and other specialty gardens, arboretums
- Habitat preserves, bird-watching areas
- Outdoor basketball
- Food and beverage sales and outdoor dining
- Public art and interactive art
- Historical and ecological interpretative exhibits
- Performance and special events spaces at a variety of sizes
- Places for spontaneous performances and busking
- Intimately-scaled, reflective spaces with benches
- Boules, bocce ball courts, chess tables and other small-scale, socially-oriented activities
- Places for Tai-chi, dance, fitness classes
- Art-making and other outdoor classrooms/learning
- Bicycle rental
- Shade structures
- Public restrooms

Some parks have been taken over by the homeless, making them uncomfortable for others to enjoy.

D. What about the design of downtown parks and open spaces?

The downtown park system lacks a positive design identity. There is no consistent design approach or branding of the parks, beyond the standard PARD sign that is used on parks throughout the City, which is out-of-scale with the typically more intimate downtown spaces. There is no way-finding system that directs users from one facility to another. There is no standard or system of high quality furnishings (i.e., fixed and moveable seating and tables, water fountains, waste and recycling bins, etc.), nor a designated "family" of lighting that is clearly park-oriented, including low path lighting, and space and area illumination. With a new generation of downtown parks, there is an opportunity to establish a more coherent design identity, in the tradition of great park systems. There is also an opportunity for the parks to express more explicitly the City's environmental values, with sustainable design elements including native vegetation, low-impact stormwater management, rainwater collection, solar collection, bio-filtration meadows, bio-swales, vegetated filter strips, energy efficient lighting, etc.

Most of the downtown parks have neither been master planned nor designed. The layouts and amenities within the parks are generally the result of piecemeal interventions, such as the addition of trail improvements, a swing set, some picnic tables, etc., rather than the result of a thoughtful master plan followed by a detailed design and planning effort. Good public open space design ensures that the spaces and amenities function well together and support the desired activities. Excellent public open space design does this in the most sustainable and artful way, integrating all of the ten principles presented above to create a memorable and beloved public space. Millennium Park in Chicago and the Seattle Olympic Sculpture Park transformed previously industrial sites into very successful and beautiful parks. These parks attract large numbers of visitors a year to the downtown area and demonstrate the importance of high quality planning and design in creating signature downtown parks.

The downtown park system lacks a positive identity and much of the open space remains unprogrammed.

Achieving design excellence is not an accident: there must be a concerted intention on the part of the procuring agent - whether it is the City of Austin, a non-profit or other entity - to select the highest qualified design team available. Austin should procure the highest quality design teams, including those both nationally and locally-recognized for park and open space design. Ideally, the best teams will be those that can skillfully combine a depth of national, and even international talent and experience, with local team members bringing experience with Austin's unique history and culture, its landscape and urban environment and its community. It is also critical to secure appropriate budgets for design and construction, as well as a healthy allocation for community and stakeholder participation. Meaningful community participation has too often been a short-

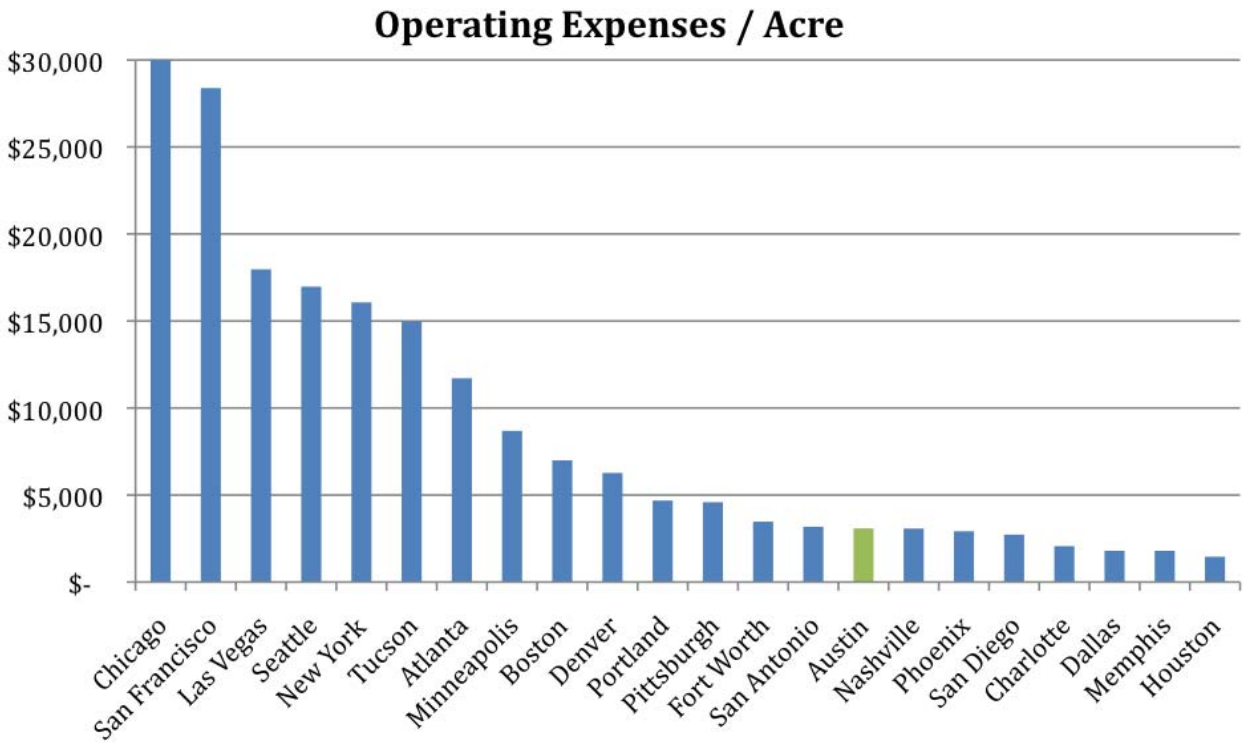
changed part of the public project planning and design process in Austin. The community involvement process is particularly critical to the success of a park, not only in achieving responsive and inclusive design, but also in building the stewardship and leadership that will be necessary to fund, implement and maintain the park.

It is also important that publicly-accessible open spaces that are created as part of public or private development receive this kind of focused attention and care. To that end, the Downtown Austin Plan is proposing minimum design standards for public open space proposed as part of a private development, and the DAP is recommending that such projects be awarded with extra floor area and/or height, if they provide high-quality, publicly-accessible open space on site. The proposed open space standards for bonused floor area include availability for public use at least 12 hours each day; accessibility and visibility from the public sidewalk with a grade change no greater than 18 inches from the sidewalk; a minimum area of 1,200 square feet; adequate solar access and shade with at least 75% of the space open to the sky; and usability with amenities and features that promote pedestrian use and activity. A fee-in-lieu of creating open space on site could be allowed as another opportunity to earn bonus density. In addition, the DAP is recommending that private development be required – not just incentivized – to build Great Streets streetscapes, which will extend the system of green, Great Streets in an important, albeit incremental, way. Additional strategies should be put in place that further incentivize property owners to improve publicly-accessible open space. These strategies could include utilizing Great Streets funding for publicly-accessible open space that complies with the minimum standards outlined in the DAP, as well as targeting strategically located/sized spaces, such as the GSA's plaza at Ninth Street, for improvements.

Design excellence is critical in branding the downtown open space system and creating a positive identity (High Line, James Corner Field Operations).

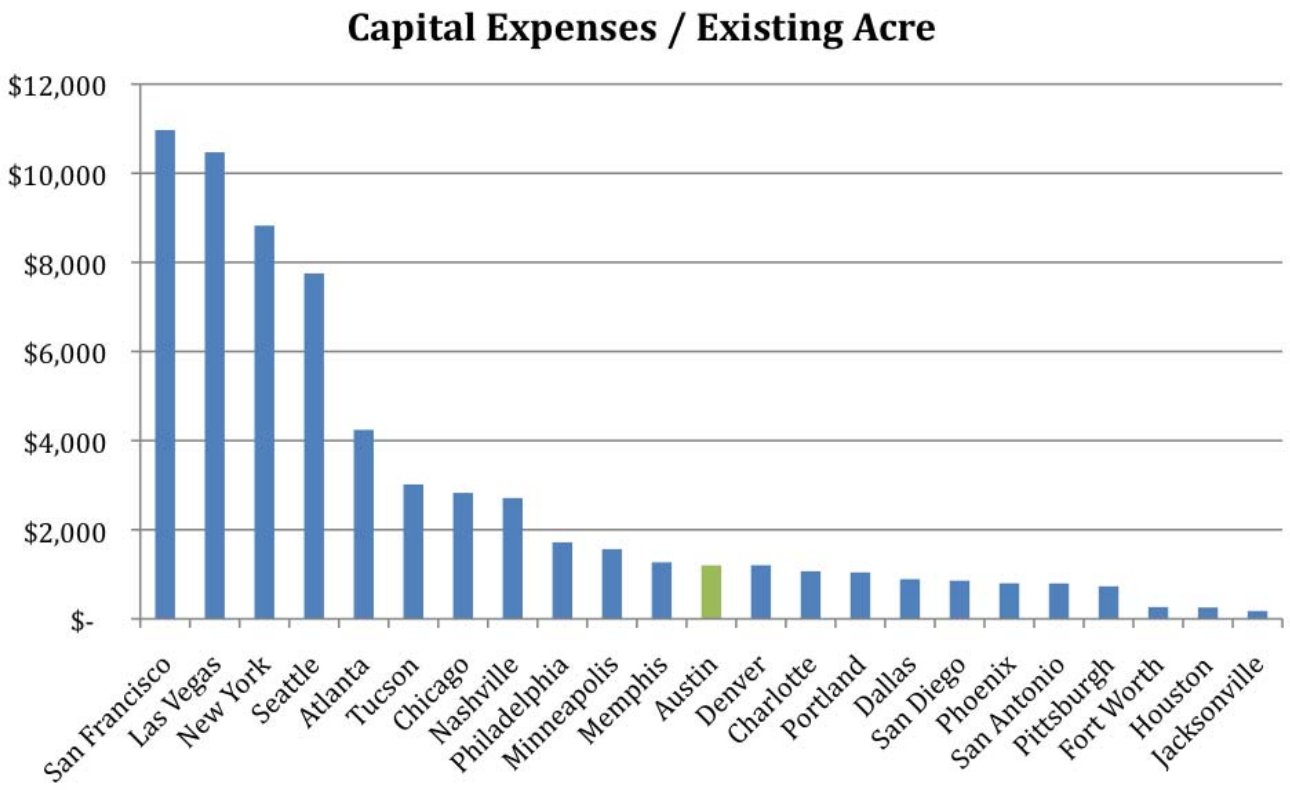
E. How are the City-controlled parks currently managed and operated, and what is spent on their development, operations and maintenance?

Citywide Maintenance and Funding PARD manages 17,500 acres of parkland citywide, with a total annual operating budget of $54 million. The majority of funding, $36 million, comes from the General Fund. This is supplemented by $8 million in grants and $10 million in enterprise funds collected from sports activities that are designed to make these services cost neutral for the City. In total, Austin spends about $3,000 per acre on its parks, which is average for cities of comparable size, but less than cities that are known for outstanding parks[2]. A likely range of the public cost for the operations and maintenance of downtown parks, based on benchmarks from other parks systems, would be $10,000 to $20,000 per acre per year, as indicated in the chart below.



2 HR&A analysis of Trust for Public Land 2006 data. Austin data has been updated with current PARD spending.

PARD's 2008-09 capital budget was $21 million; of this, $6.5 million was spent on parkland acquisition and dedication and $14.5 million was spent on capital replacements, renovations and improvements. Because cities range in size and have varying amounts of parkland, it is best to examine capital budgets in relationship to the existing acreage. Austin's annual capital budget is equivalent to $1,300 per existing acre, again falling in the middle for cities of comparable size, but behind cities that have invested heavily in park transformations in recent years.



Downtown Maintenance and Funding PARD currently provides "Level 1" services for mowing (5-7 day cycle) and daily servicing for trash removal and safety inspections to the downtown parks. The downtown parks are not maintained at a "Level 1" for all aspects, however: turf management, tree management and other non-emergency repairs services together average at a Level 3. This drives a higher operating cost for Austin's downtown parks compared to the park system as a whole, although this mix of Levels 1 and 3 still is not achieving an adequate level of maintenance. All downtown parks should be maintained at a "Level 1" for all aspects and should be prioritized to receive any needed repairs and maintenance immediately.

Park	O&M/year	Acres	O&M/acre
Brush Square	$5,000	1.8	$2,800
Duncan	$25,000	5.3	$4,700
Palm	$31,000	2.4	$12,900
Republic Square	$10,000	1.8	$5,600
Shoal Creek Greenway	$85,000	9.3	$9,100
Waller Creek Greenway	$33,000	5.3	$6,200
Symphony Square	$8,000	1.7	$4,700
Waterloo	$90,000	10	$9,000
Wooldridge Square	$9,000	1.8	$5,000
Total	**$296,000**	**39.4**	**$6,700**

PARD's funding and management efforts Downtown are supplemented by the DAA and APF. The DAA grants approximately $25,000 per year (out of its funding from the Public Improvement District) to the APF for their leadership in the redevelopment and revitalization of the downtown parks and has a staff person who dedicates 50% of their time to the downtown parks. In addition, the APF played a key role in advocating and obtaining funds for the Republic Square Auction Oaks restoration project. The $150,000 Phase 1a work and the $300,000 Phase 1b was funded through a combination of grants from Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association ($5,000), the DAA ($20,000), the General Services Administration ($30,000), Woodmen of the World ($7,000), Gables Residential ($15,000) and funds from Austin City Limits (ACL) Music Festival ($373,000). ACL donates 8.5% of ticket sales to the APF each year, which is passed through as grants to projects such as the Auction Oaks restoration in Republic Square and 54 other park improvement projects throughout Austin.

IV. PARK PROGRAMMING AND MASTER PLAN CONCEPTS

This chapter of the Master Plan describes the treatment of the ten City of Austin-controlled public parks in Downtown. These ten parks are each in different stages of their evolution in terms of the thinking, planning and community interest in moving them forward to their next stage of development. There are general ideas and intentions about each of these parks presented in PARD's March 2009 Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs. The Long Range Plan is a guide for future growth and development of all of Austin's parks and recreation system, and the DAP builds on these, providing more detailed recommendations for each of the downtown parks, as well as general policies for the downtown system. The DAP planning process has undergone a more in-depth analysis and, once adopted by City Council, should be the primary reference for recommendations for downtown parks. Further, several of the parks have undergone focused planning efforts involving immediate park stakeholders, community groups and the general community. "Friends" groups for all three historic squares have emerged, and historic reports for all three squares have been completed. The Lady Bird Lake Greenway has had the focused attention of The Trail Foundation (TTF), and all of the parks are "care-shared" through the volunteer efforts of APF. One park, Republic Square, has been completely re-designed, or "re-set", and has recently completed substantial first phase improvements. Some, such as Palm Park, are really at the first step of visioning. The master plan presentation of each park is organized by park type and includes the following information and analysis, as applicable:

- Location and History
- Ownership and Management
- Existing Conditions and Constraints
- Framing Uses and Activities
- Current Programs and Activities
- Long Term Vision and Recommendations
- Near Term Investment Recommendations

(Note: Parks policies and implementation strategies per park are discussed in the final chapter on Implementation.)

A. Greenways

Linear Greenways, consisting of Lady Bird Lake, Shoal Creek, Waller Creek parks. These greenways provide both recreational, health and social opportunities, as well as bike and pedestrian transportation linkages into Downtown. They are the "lungs" of the city and the parks that serve to connect people to nature in the most direct manner. As such, they should be maintained as the predominantly naturalistic environments they are today.

1. Lady Bird Lake Greenway

Location and History: Lady Bird Lake, formerly called Town Lake, is a reservoir on the Colorado River that runs along the southern edge of Downtown. The western end of the lake is bounded by Tom Miller Dam, built in 1939, and the eastern end is bounded by Longhorn Dam, built in 1960. Prior to the construction of the dams, the banks of Lady Bird Lake were nearly barren due to frequent flooding of the Colorado River. In 1971, the Town Lake Beautification Committee was formed with the goal of creating a "scenic corridor of hiking trails and landscaping that would allow residents and visitors the opportunity for a rural escape in an urban setting". The committee members worked in cooperation with Mayor Roy Butler and included honorary chair Lady Bird Johnson, Les Gage, Ann Butler, Carolyn Curtis, Emma Long, Jim Pfluger, Sinclair Black and other Austin citizens.[2] The committee was involved in the development of a master plan, which defined the trail layout, initial plantings and two gazebos that remain today.[3] On July 26, 2007, shortly after the death of Lady Bird Johnson, the Austin City Council passed a resolution authorizing the renaming of Town Lake to Lady Bird Lake in honor of the former First Lady.

Ownership and Management: Lady Bird Lake parkland is owned by the City of Austin. The trail is managed and maintained by both the PARD and The Trail Foundation (TTF). TTF is a non-profit organization that was formed in 2003 to work in cooperation with PARD to address needs and protect and enhance the Trail at Lady Bird Lake. TTF takes donations of funds and volunteer labor to execute improvements to the trail, which have included Lady Bird Lake trash cleanups, design and construction of the public restroom near Rainey Street, installation of new mile markers and landscape lighting and a vision plan for the trail.

Prior to the daming of the Colorado River, the banks were frequently flooded and unattractive.

Existing Conditions and Constraints: Lady Bird Lake Trail creates a 10-mile loop around the lake and extends from Mopac (Loop 1) at the western extent to the Longhorn Dam at the eastern extent. The trail is located along

2 http://www.thetrailfoundation.org/
3 RVi and The Trail Foundation. The Trail at Lady Bird Lake Vision Plan. September 2008.

the north shoreline for the entire length and the south shoreline from Loop 1 to just east of Congress Avenue, at which point the trail merges with the sidewalk along Riverside Drive. The south shoreline trail resumes approximately halfway between IH 35 and the Longhorn Dam. Pedestrian and bicycle crossings over Lady Bird Lake occur at the Roberta Crenshaw Pedestrian Walkway (under Loop 1 Bridge), Pfluger Bridge (east of Lamar Boulevard), South First Street Bridge (Drake Bridge), Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge, IH 35 Bridge and Longhorn Dam. Overall, the character of Lady Bird Lake trail is very natural and lush.

The downtown portion of the Lady Bird Lake Trail runs adjacent to the north shoreline from Lamar Boulevard to IH 35 and includes approximately 41 acres. Accessible pathways to the bridge crossings occur only at Pfluger Bridge and South First Street Bridge. The surface material of the trail is primarily decomposed granite with portions consisting of concrete. Both the Shoal Creek Hike-and-Bike Trail and the Waller Creek Trail connect to the Lady Bird Lake Trail, creating links through Downtown. Pedestrian/bicycle bridges are located at the mouths of both Shoal Creek and Waller Creek.

There are approximately nine acres of park space within the downtown portion of Lady Bird Lake Greenway that is largely unprogrammed with minimal landscaping and maintenance. These areas, principally located between Waller Creek and IH 35, contribute little to the overall trail or park experience. While these are not at all a "negative" to the trail experience, these spaces could afford opportunities to enhance the parkland by offering other types of recreation or nature conservation areas.

The underutlized spaces (left) along the trail are relatively divorced from the space of the trail. Important habitat for many species is found at the confluence of Waller Creek and Lady Bird Lake (right).

The Lady Bird Lake Greenway provides important habitat for many species. Perhaps the most well-known wildlife "residents" along the corridor are the 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats living under the Congress Avenue Bridge from March to October. These bats make up the largest urban bat colony in North America and attract thousands of viewers every year. In addition, the riparian vegetation along the corridor includes a diversity of plant species and is home to a variety of birds, squirrels, raccoons and other wildlife. The lake also includes several species of turtles and fish.

Framing Uses and Activities: The uses along the downtown portion of Lady Bird Lake are mainly office and residential, but other existing uses include hotels, the Seaholm Power Plant between the railroad crossing and Shoal Creek, City Hall at South First Street Bridge and the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) just east of Waller Creek. Some portions of the parkland have a significant grade change between the trail area and adjacent buildings, creating discontinuity between the trail and upland activities. This grade change is most extreme in the core of Downtown, between Shoal Creek and Waller Creek. In addition, Cesar Chavez, a five-lane arterial roadway separates the trail from adjacent uses along the western extent of Downtown to Congress Avenue. East of Waller Creek, adjacent uses flank the park, but the large amount of underutilized park adjacent to some areas of the trail creates an inconsistent and ill-defined edge for the parkland.

The Pfluger Bridge extension will provide a safe link between the Lady Bird Lake trail and the north side of Cesar Chavez Street.

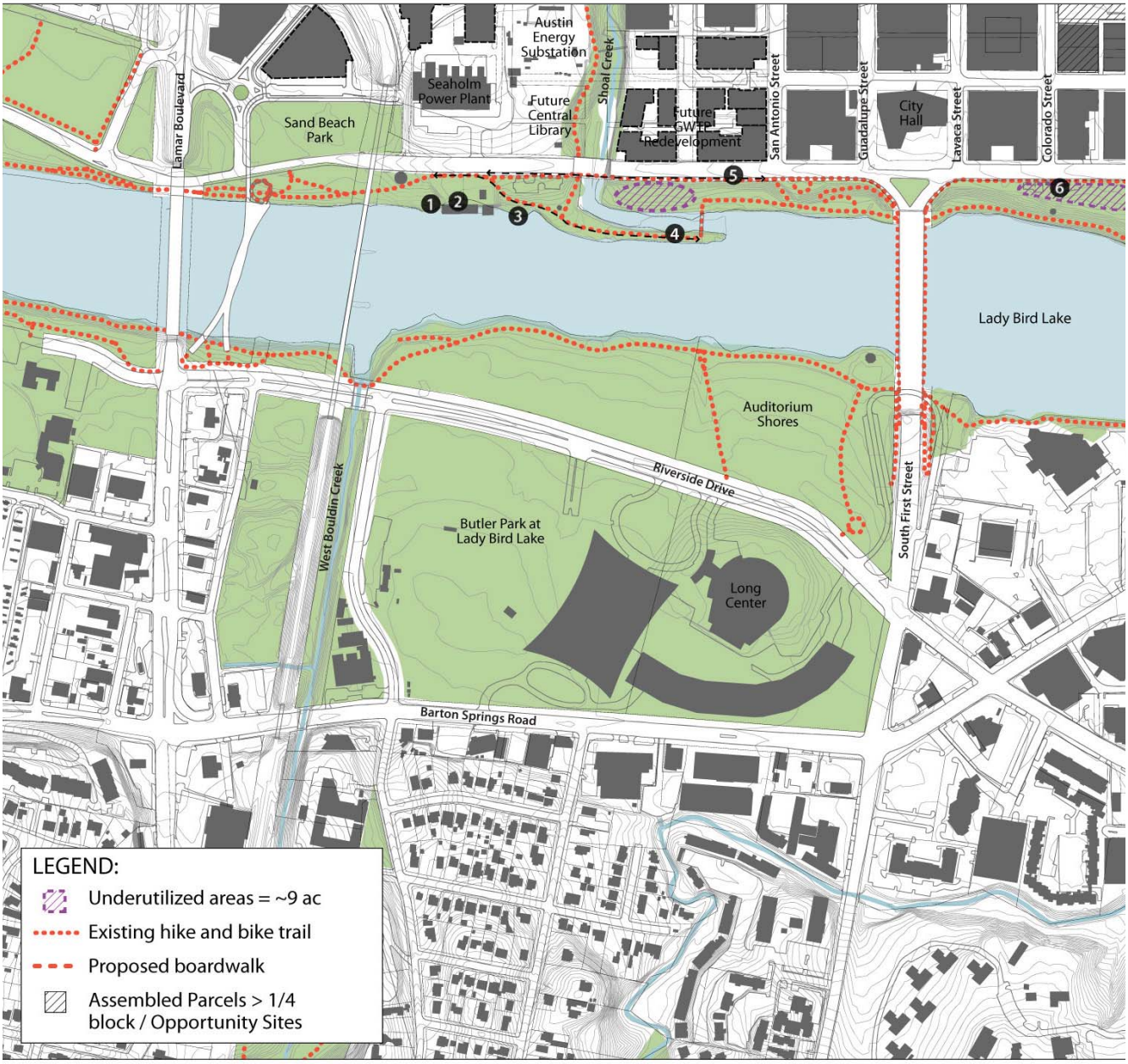
There are several dense, mixed-use emerging projects located west of the South First Street Bridge that will provide a positive edge to, and interaction with, the trail. These include Trammel Crow's redevelopment of the Green Water Plant ("Project Green") between San Antonio Street and Shoal Creek, the Central Library just west of Shoal Creek, and the Seaholm Power Plant Redevelopment ("Seaholm Power") between Shoal Creek and the railroad crossing. A new public park, Sand Beach Park, just north of Pfluger Bridge and the Gables development north of Sand Beach will add about an acre of open space to the Sand Beach Reserve area within the Lady Bird Lake Greenway. The Pfluger Bridge extension across Cesar Chavez will provide a much needed, safe pedestrian and bicycle crossing over Cesar Chavez Boulevard to this new park and the Downtown beyond. This bridge extension should be completed within the next few years. PARD will soon be implementing two new amenities in the stretch of shoreline between Waller Creek and IH 35: a new children's playscape and an ADA-accessible pier.

Current Activities and Programs: Lady Bird Lake is a major recreational destination for Austin, attracting more than 1.5 million visits a year.[4] The 2003 PARD Trail User Survey quantified the types of activities occurring along the trail, as follows: running (50%), walking (31%), biking (8%), dog walking (6%), baby carriage strolling (2%), nature walking (1%), people watching/socializing (1%), with transportation and fishing being less than one-tenth per cent each. The majority of activity occurs during the morning (47%) and evening (27%), with some activity occurring in the afternoon (17%) and mid-day (9%).[5] Lady Bird Lake is also a very popular spot for rowing, canoeing and kayaking and is considered by the US Rowing Association as one of the best places to row in the county. The Boathouse, located just west of the confluence with Waller Creek, is owned by PARD and leased by the Austin Rowing

4 http://www.thetrailfoundation.org/
5 RVi and The Trail Foundation. The Trail at Lady Bird Lake Vision Plan. September 2008.

KEY GOALS

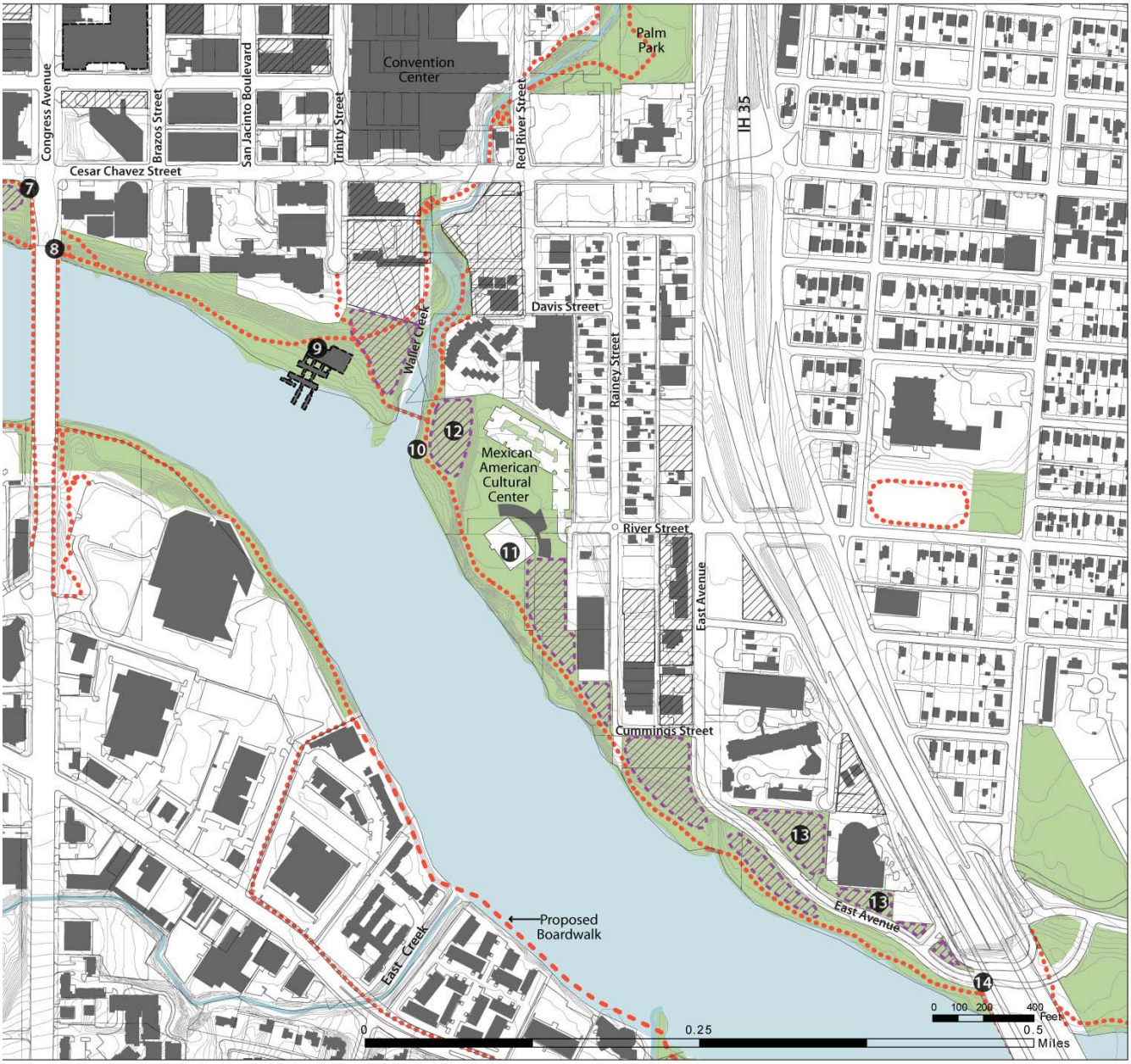
- Introduce additional activities and spaces to attract a greater diversity of users.
- Program and improve underutilized parkland along trail.
- Manage understory vegetation along the lake to improve views and access to the water.
- Continue to make trail improvements to accommodate growing bike and pedestrian use.
- Develop a cohesive trail signage system.



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance boat landing.
2. Reuse Seaholm Intake Structure as restaurant.
3. Open view from sloped meadow to lake.
4. Widen trail and remove concrete.
5. Extend sidewalk/promenade to Seaholm.
6. Improve as lawn/plaza and remove promenade railing. Add concessions kiosk near Buford Tower.
7. Provide accessible route from Congress Avenue to trail.
8. Improve trail under Congress Avenue.
9. Ensure that future boathouse provides a multi-use attraction.

Lady Bird Lake Improvement Concept



⑩ Create bird viewing area.
⑪ Activate MACC plaza with restaurant, gardens, shade, etc.
⑫ Create children's play area.
⑬ Provide formal and/or community gardens.
⑭ Enhance area under IH 35.

Lady Bird Lake should continue to be the preeminent recreational attraction in the downtown.

Club. There are additional rowing facilities and canoe/kayak rental locations outside of the downtown segment. The substantial activity along the trail does result in some conflicts between users, but the PARD survey reflected a conflict issue with only 27% of respondents. These conflicts included speeding bikers (56%), uncontrolled dogs (20%), other conflicts (14%) and running groups (10%).

Long Term Vision and Recommendations: The Lady Bird Lake Trail should continue to be the preeminent recreational attraction in downtown Austin. The trail is a very successful linear park and has had a strong identity for the past 30 years. Future improvements should aim to increase the diversity of activities, maintain the natural beauty of the trail and lake and make enhancements that accommodate the users. Long Term recommendations include:

- ***Introduce additional activities to attract a greater diversity of park users.*** Additional activities could include children's play areas, temporary concessions, cafes and restaurants, natural preserves and viewing areas, community gardens, botanical and/or specialty gardens, programmed areas for small sports, performance and event spaces and places for public art and sculpture.

- ***Program and improve underutilized parkland along the trail.*** These improvements could include creating a natural preserve at the mouth of Shoal and Waller Creeks, creating an active plaza at the foot of Congress Avenue, re-purposing the Seaholm Intake Structure as a café/restaurant, introducing new activities on and around the MACC Plaza, providing a children's play area adjacent to the MACC and introducing community and/or specialty gardens along East Avenue.

- ***Continue improvement of the trail in response to the growing pedestrian and bicycle use.*** These efforts should include widening the trail to 14 feet wherever possible, extending the promenade along the south side of Cesar Chavez to Sand Beach Park, creating an accessible trail from Congress Avenue to the shoreline, improving the trail beneath Congress Avenue Bridge, improving the pedestrian connectivity between Downtown and the lake and extending a trail along Waller Creek to The University of Texas.

- ***Mitigate the Cesar Chavez barrier and high traffic nature of the street between the trail and Downtown.*** Improvements to alleviate this barrier could include providing safe pedestrian crossings at all intersections along Cesar Chavez between Lamar Boulevard and Congress Avenue, constructing the Pfluger Bridge Extension, extending the street-level promenade along the south side of Cesar Chavez to Sand Beach Park and planting a row of

trees along the north side of Cesar Chavez adjacent to the Lance Armstrong Bikeway.

Near Term Investment Recommendations:

- ***Manage understory vegetation to improve views and access to Lake.*** Regular maintenance should include removal of invasive species, maintenance and enhancement of aquatic vegetation and creation of additional access points to the water (landings, docks, overlooks and beaches).

- ***Development of a cohesive trail signage system*** that provides directional information, bicycle and pedestrian safety information, trailhead signage and interpretive displays.

- ***Install lighting along the downtown portion of the trail*** that is consistent with the lighting already in place along various portions of the trail.

2. Shoal Creek Greenway

Location and History: The Shoal Creek Greenway consists of approximately 9.3 acres within the DAP study area and approximately 77 acres overall. The Greenway begins at the confluence of Shoal Creek and Lady Bird Lake and extends north through the western portion of Downtown. It exits Downtown at Lamar Boulevard, south of West Fifteenth Street and continues north to Thirty-Eighth Street.

Shoal Creek was the original western border of the City of Austin in the 1839 Waller Plan. Formal preservation of the creek began in 1875 when Pease Park, located north of Fifteenth Street, was dedicated as parkland. The Shoal Creek trail system was the first of Austin's hike-and-bike trail network, and was started by an Austin citizen, Janet Long Fish, in the 1950s. The area north of Fifteenth Street was the first part of the trail, and the downtown segment was added in the 1970s.[6]

Flooding has been an ongoing issue along Shoal Creek. The 1981 "Memorial Day Flood" resulted in 13 deaths and the loss of 500 newly-delivered cars to a dealership along the creek.

The Shoal Creek corridor has experienced major flood events as urbanization of the Shoal Creek Watershed has occurred. The "Memorial Day Flood" in 1981 caused extreme flooding along the corridor, resulting in a flow of six million gallons per minute, compared to the normal 90 gallons per minute flow. The flood caused 13 deaths, resulted in the loss of 500 newly-delivered cars to a car dealership along Shoal Creek[7] and flooded several businesses along Lamar Boulevard. Several other floods have caused major damage along the Shoal Creek corridor.

Ownership and Management: The Greenway is owned and managed by the City of Austin. The Austin Parks Foundation and Friends of Shoal Creek Trail perform regular maintenance along the greenway.

Existing Conditions and Constraints: The downtown segment of the Shoal Creek Greenbelt includes the creek corridor and some adjacent parcels of land. The total length of the greenbelt within Downtown is approximately one mile. The trail primarily runs along the west side of the creek from Lady Bird Lake to Ninth Street and along its east side north of Ninth Street. Access between the trail system and the cross streets occurs at Cesar Chavez, Third Street, Ninth Street, Tenth Street, Eleventh Street, Twelfth Street and Lamar Boulevard.

The stormwater impact to the stream channel has been significant and has resulted in a deteriorated trail system and eroded banks in many areas. Periodic flooding continues to be a problem with many of the adjacent parcels, especially in the downtown area.

6 http://www.txinfo.com/brykerwoods/Parks/ShoalCreek.html
7 http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/watershed/floodhistory.htm

The trail runs along the entire downtown corridor with the exception of a gap just south of West Fifth Street. Portions of the original trail have been replaced and the resulting system has a patchwork-feel that lacks a cohesive character. Vegetation along the trail is often overgrown and invasive species are present throughout the corridor.

Framing Uses and Activities: The downtown segment of Shoal Creek has an urban character and the majority of the uses along it are office and residential. Most buildings turn their back to the creek and lack a positive interaction with the creek corridor. The creek corridor and trail serve as important connectors to parks through the western portion of Downtown and to the north. The trail connects the Lady Bird Lake Greenway, Duncan Park, House Park and Pease Park to the north. This important connection allows users to access these parks by foot or bicycle in a natural setting with limited contact with automobiles.

Current Activities and Programs: Walking, running and bicycling are the most common activities in Shoal Creek Greenway. The connections to Lady Bird Lake and Pease Park provide a fluid transition from these active parks to the Shoal Creek trail system. Shoal Creek trail is an important bicycle commuter route because of the extensive north-south coverage and its alignment through Downtown. Activity along the downtown segment of Shoal Creek is significantly less intensive than that along the adjoining Lady Bird Lake and Pease Park greenways. The portion of the trail between Lady Bird Lake and Third Street is most heavily used and serves as an important pedestrian and bicycle connection between the lake and Downtown. The gap in the trail south of Fifth Street contributes to the lower levels of activity north of Third Street.

West Avenue Lofts (above) along Shoal Creek is one of the few developments along the creek that embraces the corridor, creating a positive interaction. The gap in the trail just south of West Fifth Street (below) is a major barrier in the trail continuity and experience.

Long Term Vision and Recommendations: Shoal Creek Greenway should continue to function as an important north-south pedestrian and bicycle path, and as a healthy riparian ribbon that meanders through the urban fabric. The 1998 Shoal Creek Greenway Action Plan outlined several important recommendations for the downtown segment of Shoal Creek. Most of the recommendations have not been implemented, but are important action items to reinvigorate the greenbelt. Near and long term opportunities should aim to increase activity, improve the ecological integrity of the riparian corridor and improve the interactions between the adjacent developments and the creek corridor. Long term opportunities should focus on developing a master plan for the downtown creek corridor, evaluating the need for flood improvements and creating a cohesive greenway through Downtown.

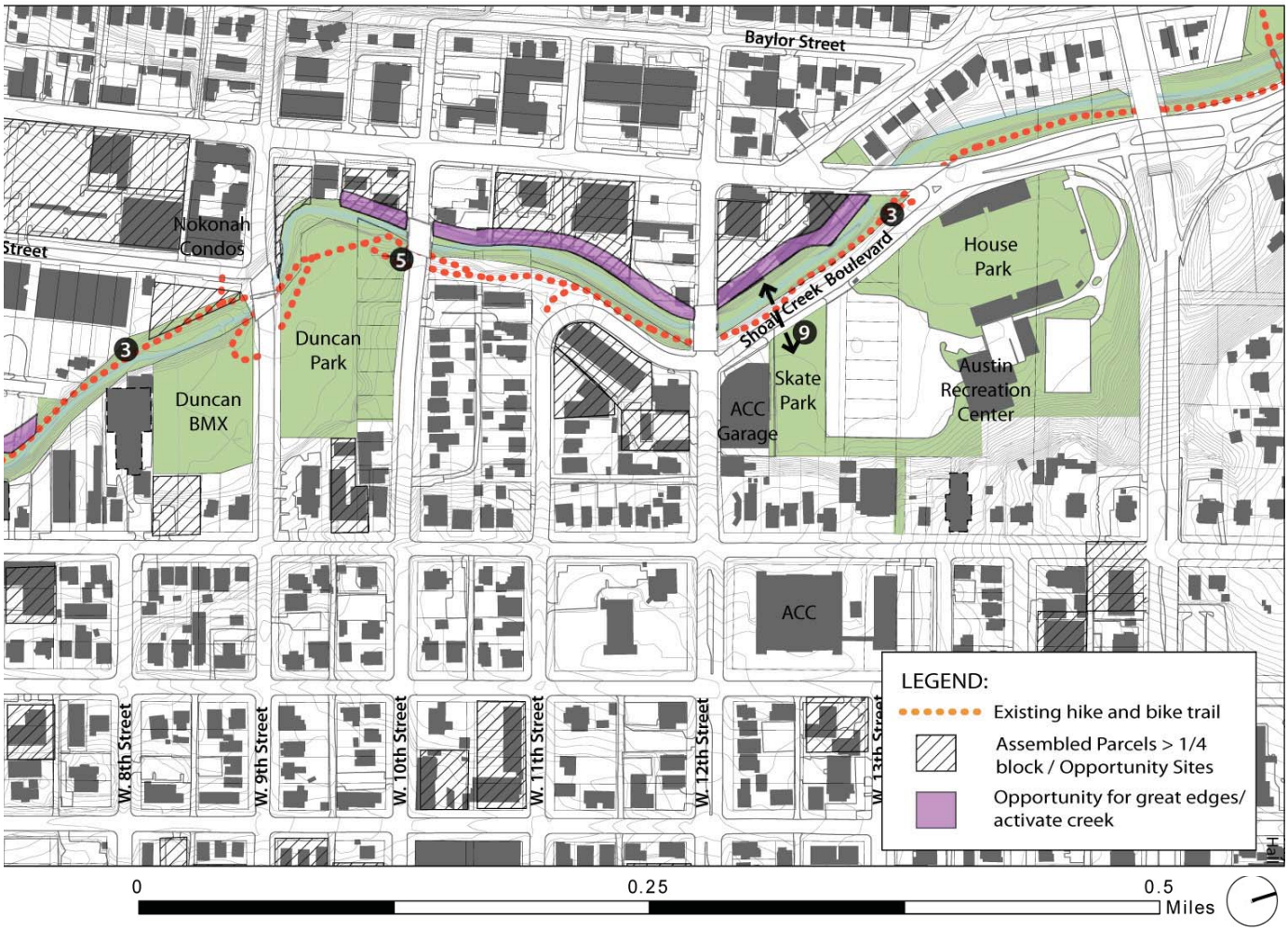
KEY GOALS

- Improve trail width and continuity.
- Introduce regular professional maintenance and security programs.
- Plan for future flood control, erosion control and water quality improvements.
- Require private development to contribute to creek environment.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Resolve gaps in trail and obtain access easements between West Avenue and 5th Street.
2. Improve bicycle access beneath railroad trestle and pedestrian bridge.
3. Widen trail to 14 feet wherever possible.
4. Introduce creekside trail below West Avenue.
5. Provide accessible route from street sidewalks to trail.
6. Restore historic bridge.
7. Preserve unique character of deep channel and spring.

Shoal Creek Improvement Concept



8 Provide pedestrian/bike connection and bike parking.

9 Ensure connections between BMX park, Shoal Creek and new skate park.

Shoal Creek Trail should be improved to enhance this important north-south bicycle and pedestrian connection.

- ***Improve trail width and continuity throughout the corridor.*** Improvements should include the introduction of bike access beneath the railroad trestle and pedestrian bridge at Third Street, widening the trail to a minimum width of 10, with a preferred width of 14 feet wherever possible, introducing a creekside trail along certain segments (below Third Street) and providing an accessible route from street sidewalks to the trail.

- ***Evaluate the need for flood control, erosion control and water quality improvements.*** This could include a potential diversion of upstream flood waters with a tunnel, interception of urban run-off, bank stabilization and riparian re-vegetation.

Near Term Investment Recommendations: The near term improvements should aim to create a continuous trail system and provide an appealing and safe corridor to visit.

- ***Finalize negotiations with the adjacent property owner to resolve the gap in the trail*** and obtain a public access easement between West Avenue and West Fifth Street.

- ***Introduce regular professional maintenance and security programs.*** This should include management of the understory vegetation and invasive species, expansion of volunteer programs, intensification of debris removal efforts, expansion of bike patrols and introduction of path lighting.

- ***Implement regulations that require private development to contribute to the creek environment.*** Regulations should include requirements for setback and access easements, accessible street connections, ground level uses, building orientation and mitigation improvements. Regulations should also address the relationship between the development and street to ensure that a strong street connection is created/maintained.

- ***Enhance bike facilities.*** Coordinate with new Central Library to provide ample bicycle parking near the Shoal Creek and Lance Armstrong Bikeway intersection. Consider integrating a bike rental station and/or bike station at this location.

- ***Develop a comprehensive way-finding program*** throughout the corridor that extends to the surrounding land uses and streets.

- ***Install lighting along the downtown portion of the trail***.

3. Waller Creek Greenway

Location and History: Named after Austin's first mayor, Edwin Waller, Waller Creek runs along the eastern edge of the original 1853 plat of the City. The creek flows about 6.6 miles from its headwaters to Lady Bird Lake, passing along UT's Intramural Fields, Shipe Park, Hancock Golf Course, the UT Main Campus and through the eastern part of Downtown, one block west of IH 35. Because of a series of significant floods in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the area never established itself as a viable residential district. With the completion of the Capitol in 1888 and the subsequent downtown boom, the area evolved into a commercial and warehousing area, with some tenement and shanty housing in the mix. In addition to killing 35 people, the devastating flood of 1915 destroyed all of the bridges along the creek corridor. Most of the distinctive, present-day bridges were reconstructed immediately after the flood (Fifteenth Street in 1916), and throughout the 1920s and 30s.

In the late 1970s, as part of the Bicentennial celebration, the City undertook hike-and-bike trail improvements within the creek corridor. In the intervening years, significant segments of these improvements have been washed away by flooding and erosion, leaving a discontinuous trail system, and an inactive open space environment, portions of which have been occupied by homeless encampments. Various studies and plans have been undertaken over the past twenty-five years, but no significant new public investment had been committed until 1998, when voters approved a bond for the construction of a by-pass tunnel to divert floodwaters beneath the creek corridor from Twelfth Street to Lady Bird Lake. This major public works project is currently being designed, and is planned for completion by late 2014. The majority of the funding for the tunnel project is through the City of Austin and Travis County Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District established in 2007 to fund the project. Parallel with this effort, the City has initiated the Waller Creek District Master Plan, which has established a community vision for the surface amenities and improvements along the corridor, such as new trails, bridges and streets, as well as design standards for new development in this district.

This 1890 bird's eye view of Austin shows the importance of the creeks in the layout of Austin. The City grew around the creeks, but turned its back to them.

Ownership and Management: The Waller Creek corridor is under multiple ownerships. Between East Tenth and East Fifteenth streets, the creek passes through Waterloo Park, Symphony Square and Symphony Plaza, all of which is City of Austin parkland, owned and managed by PARD. South of Tenth Street, the creek corridor is under both public and private ownership, with many overlapping drainage and access easements. As with Shoal Creek, the Austin Parks Foundation performs periodic volunteer clean-ups of the creek.

Existing Conditions and Constraints: Because of its flood-prone nature and the resulting development patterns that have occurred along it, Waller Creek has never evolved as the positive recreational corridor or amenity envisioned by so many over the years. Much of the Downtown and the IH 35 corridor drains into the creek, increasing flooding and reducing water quality. Apart from some efforts to engage the creek in the 1980s (e.g., Hilton Garden Inn and the Sheraton), most development has turned its back to the waterway. Downtown streets pass over the creek with little or no relationship to the unique Hill Country stream below. Pedestrian and bicycle trails are discontinuous and do not meet current accessibility standards. Lack of activity and visual oversight has made the area unsafe and unattractive for recreational use. Eroding creek banks have further contributed to an overall image of abandonment and neglect.

Long Term Vision and Recommendations: Since the 1976 Austin Creeks Master Plan sanctioned by the City of Austin National Bicentennial Commission, Waller Creek has been envisioned as an urban greenway providing a positive open space within the urban fabric, and connecting Downtown with outlying neighborhoods. Recent community outreach sessions undertaken as part of the Waller Creek District Plan (a City project running concurrently with the DAP), have reconfirmed this underlying vision. The Master Plan has articulated three specific recommendations for the corridor:

- ***Enhance the creek's ecological, hydrological and open space value.*** Although the planned flood control project will re-circulate Lady Bird Lake water through the Waller Creek channel, and divert much of the upstream floodwaters into the Tunnel, there is still an important opportunity to improve the environmental integrity of the creek corridor as a natural riparian system, with: stabilized stream banks to address erosion, interception of urban run-off to enhance water quality, and the introduction of vegetated flood benches to create and maintain aquatic and wildlife habitat. In addition, the open space potential of the creek corridor as a linear greenway should be maximized to provide a critical recreational amenity in a part of the Downtown that has experienced urban deterioration and a lack of investment over the past decades. Preservation and management of existing vegetation and the naturalistic character of the corridor is an important element of maintaining both the open space and ecological value of the corridor.

- ***Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to, across and along the creek corridor.*** The improvement of the Waller Creek corridor should remove existing barriers to pedestrian and bicycle access, and result in an open space destination and attraction that can help to connect diverse parts of the Downtown and Central City, including East Austin, Rainey Street, the UT Campus and Lady Bird Lake. Appropriately-scaled paths of travel for bikes and pedestrians should be established along the length of the creek corridor between Lady Bird Lake and UT, and streetscape improvements

should be made to improve east-west pedestrian and bicycle access between East Austin and the downtown core.

The riparian vegetation of Lady Bird Lake should extend north along the Waller Creek corridor.

- ***Promote activity and investment along the creek and in the surrounding area.*** Improvements of the creek corridor should be designed to catalyze redevelopment and re-investment, not only within and along the creek, but also within the larger area surrounding the corridor. This is important to both support the TIF District, as well as to introduce activities that can ensure sustainable and viable use and enjoyment of the corridor. Retail and restaurant uses overlooking the creek and along the walkways can help to create a lively and safe pedestrian environment; new residential development can bring a new population of users to the area; hotel development can reinforce the district's tourist and visitor appeal; and office and commercial uses can bring a larger entrepreneurial constituency to this part of Downtown. The fact that many properties within the district are constrained by Capitol View Corridors, also presents the opportunity for a diversity of development types and uses, including low and mid-rise housing that can provide an affordable alternative to high-density living in other parts of the Core, as well as live-work studios and workshops that can support "creative class" activity.

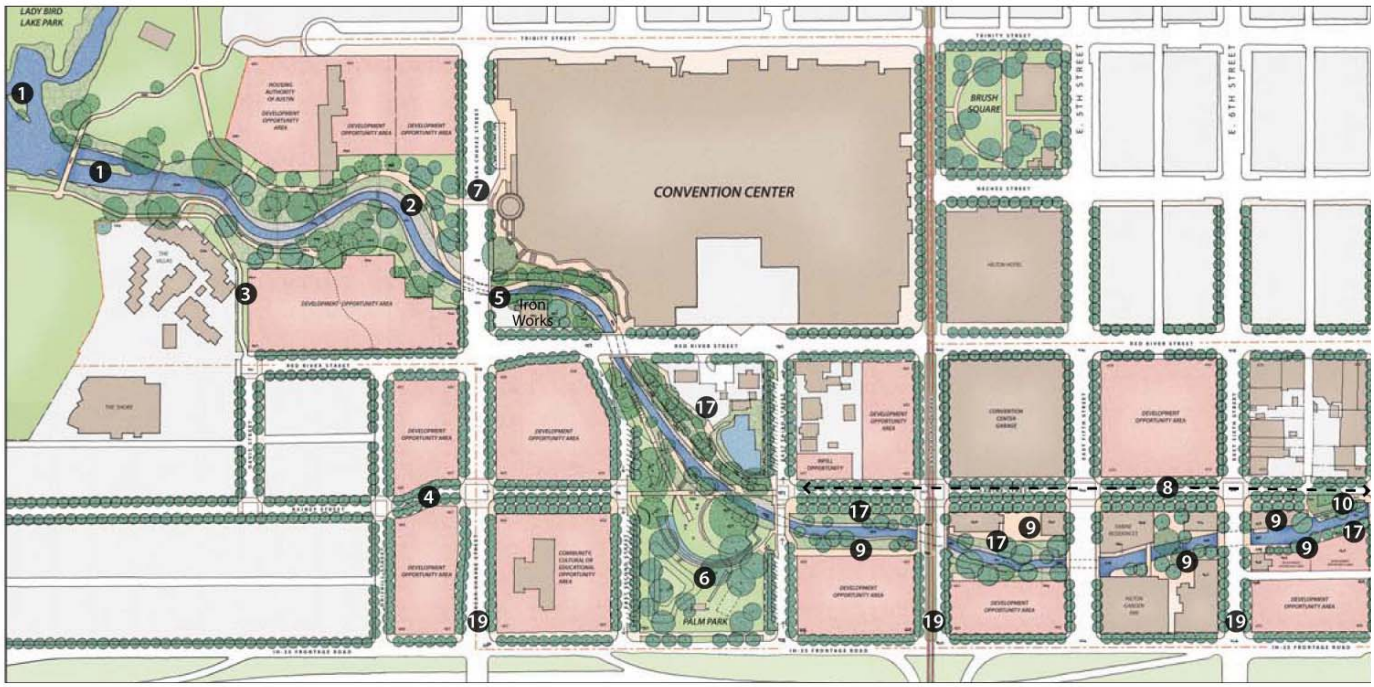
Near Term Investment Recommendations: It is hoped that a significant portion of the long-term vision for Waller Creek can be implemented in tandem with the Tunnel project, scheduled for completion in 2014. In advance of the implementation of the proposed capital improvements, however, some shorter-term measures should be considered to provide for the transition of the creek corridor from its current condition:

- ***Raise the community's consciousness of the creek corridor through special events and programs.*** Waller Creek is a forgotten element of the downtown environment. Special events in around the creek would help raise the community's consciousness of its potential, and promote the overall vision for the area and the specific improvements proposed by the Master Plan. Such events could include: street fairs or markets along Sabine Street; festivals, performances or community-sponsored celebrations in Palm Park; bicycle and walking tours of the corridor to highlight its potential; and other events that increase its exposure.

- ***Provide outreach to the homeless population in the creek, and enforce anti-camping and vagrancy policies.*** The City should take a proactive role in providing outreach and assistance to individuals who have established campsites within Waller Creek, providing them with information and

KEY GOALS

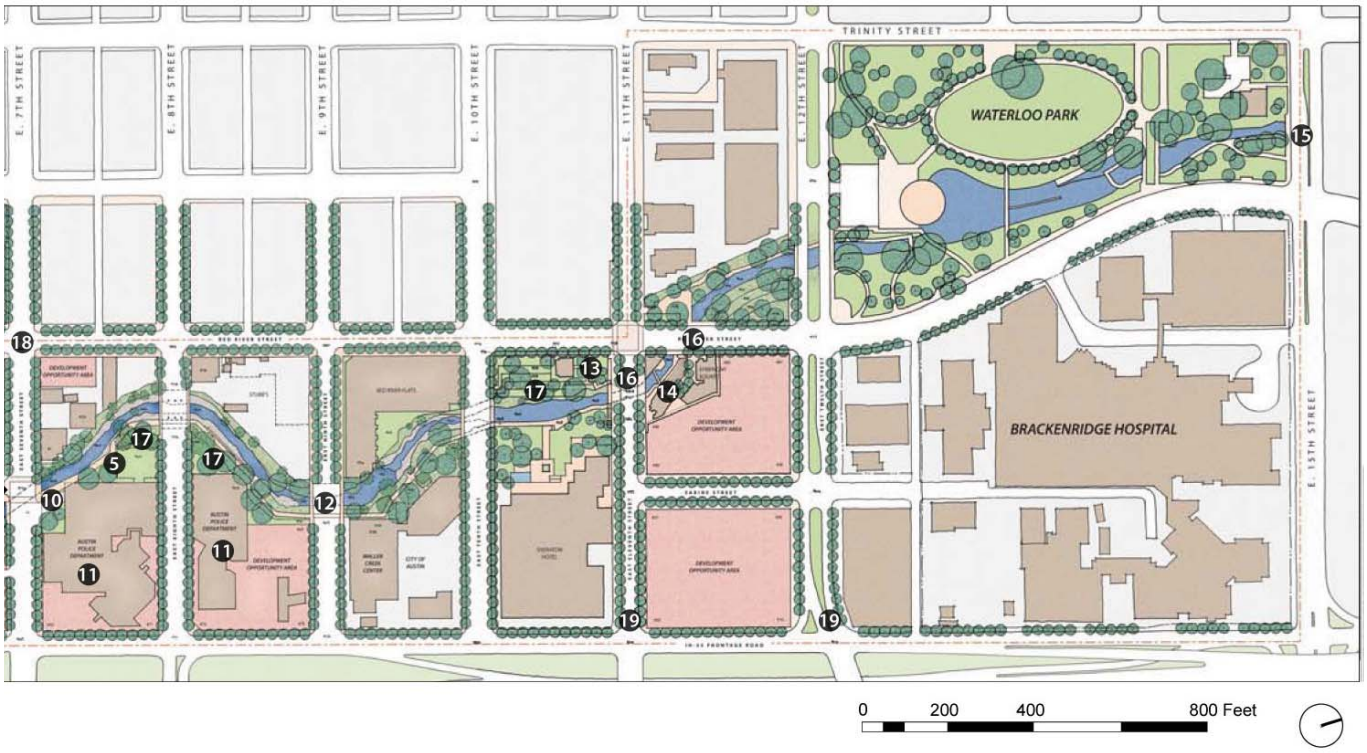
- Enhance the creek's ecological, hydrological and open space value.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle linkages to, across and along the creek corridor.
- Promote activity and investment along the creek in the surrounding areas.



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

❶ Preserve habitat islands and create bird-viewing areas from bridge and east shore of Waller Creek.
❷ Preserve and enhance the natural open space character of Waller Creek south of Cesar Chavez Street.
❸ Establish an access easement to link Davis Street with the existing trail.
❹ Extend Rainey Street to Cesar Chavez and north to Palm Park with signalized intersection.
❺ Elevate trail on delicate pier structure to reduce its impact on creek.
❻ Improve Palm Park as family-friendly open space with interactive water play area.
❼ Create at-grade signalized crossing to connect trail with Convention Center.
❽ Create Sabine Street promenade to provide access and activity adjacent to constrained segment of creek (3rd to 7th streets).
❾ Promote creekside restaurant development with overlooking terraces.
❿ Improve plaza at Seventh and Sabine Streets.

Waller Creek Concept Plan Analysis



⓫ Explore redevelopment potential for police and municipal courts sites that creates new public parkland areas at the creek edge.
⓬ Explore future removal of vehicular bridge and replacement with a ped/bike bridge that allows for trail undercrossing.
⓭ Create secure, covered bike parking in Symphony Plaza.
⓮ Revitalize and program Symphony Square and plaza. Repurpose various buildings for more active, pedestrian uses.
⓯ Extend creekside trail under 15th Street to connect to UT campus via Centennial Park.
⓰ Reroute trail to grade. Close underpasses. Explore re-building E. 11th and Red River street bridges to improve sense of safety and space for the creekside trail.
⓱ Create flood benches where possible by laying back creek banks.
⓲ Implement bike lanes on Red River Street per City of Austin Bike Plan.
⓳ Improve east-west pedestrian/bicycle linkages between East Austin and Downtown.

available services. At the same time, the Austin Police Department should provide more consistent enforcement of existing anti-camping and vagrancy laws that prohibit overnight camps within the corridor, and the Downtown Rangers should provide more consistent patrolling of the area to discourage camping and vagrancy activities.

- ***Introduce higher levels of maintenance along the creek.*** It is recommended that the City provide increased levels of maintenance along the creek immediately, including more regular trash clean-up, landscape management and trail clearance. Volunteer efforts by groups like American Youthworks, the Downtown Austin Community Court and others could also be included in this program.

- ***Establish interim measures to intercept and improve the quality of stormwater run-off.*** It is recommended that the Public Works and Watershed Protection departments develop a program of interim measures to improve the quality of urban run-off into the creek. Such measures could include selective interception and re-routing of stormwater lines as appropriate and introduction of filters and interceptors in on-street catch basins.

- ***Undertake selective trail, erosion control and streambank stabilization improvements.*** Even before the initial phase of improvements programmed by the Waller Creek District Master Plan occur, it will be possible to initiate selective streambank stabilization and trail improvement efforts that contribute to the ultimate planned improvements, and/or that are outside of the areas planned for intensive change in the Master Plan. These could include interim stabilization of eroding banks south of Cesar Chavez Boulevard, between Palm Park and East Fifth Street and the western bank between Seventh and Eighth streets. As part of this effort, trail continuity could also be restored beneath the Cesar Chavez Bridge and between East Third and Fifth streets.

Activities that add to the open space experience are encouraged.

B. City-Wide Parks

City-Wide Parks, consisting of Capitol Square, Waterloo Park, House Park Skate Park and Austin Recreation Center and Palm Park. These parks function to bring people from all over, to city and regional events and celebrations. Typically these are larger parks than downtown neighborhood-serving or urban parks. They are typically characterized by large, flat and open expanses of land that can accommodate such events. Palm Park, although smaller than most city-wide serving parks, can be placed in this category because of the larger role it plays as part of the Waller Creek Greenway and its connection to and potential use by the Convention Center.

1. Palm Park

Location and History: Palm Park is located in the southeastern quadrant of Downtown, along the eastern bank of Waller Creek, and bounded by East Third Street (formerly Cypress Street), the IH 35 frontage road (formerly East Avenue) and the Second Street right-of-way which was never improved as a street. The 1928 "A City Plan for Austin", called for the existing play area in this location to be expanded as a "playground", and for the "ox-bow" of Waller Creek, which wrapped around the park, to be realigned to its current configuration along the western edge of the park. The area was directly north of the Palm Elementary School, built in the 1890s with several later additions, so a public park at this location was a natural choice. The 1928 City Plan also recommended the beautification of East Avenue into a major park-like boulevard, which was implemented in the 1930s, creating a pleasant edge to the planned park. The park was acquired by the City in 1929, and in 1933, a wading pool and the Palm School playground were opened to the public during summer months. A small, stone restroom structure with a breezeway terrace was built during this period, and has become a landmark within the open space. The tiny restrooms on either side of the breezeway were actually used as a lending library just after World War II.

In the 1960s, a public swimming pool and tennis courts were constructed. In the last few years the tennis court was removed, and there has been discussion of removing the substandard swimming pool, although this has been met with some opposition by members of the Cesar Chavez neighborhood to the east. The Palm School and Palm Park played a very central role in the history of Austin's Hispanic community, many of whom lived close by. It was a place of community celebrations, picnics, games – very much a place for families. Today, the park is still a very important part of East Austin's heritage, and this should be recognized and celebrated in the park's new life. The school and the park were named for Swante Palm, a Swedish immigrant to Texas in 1838, who ultimately became a Travis County Justice of the Peace, Austin

The Palm School is adjacent to the park and has played a very central role in Austin's Hispanic community.

postmaster and Austin City Councilman. Palm was most known for the voluminous library he donated to UT.

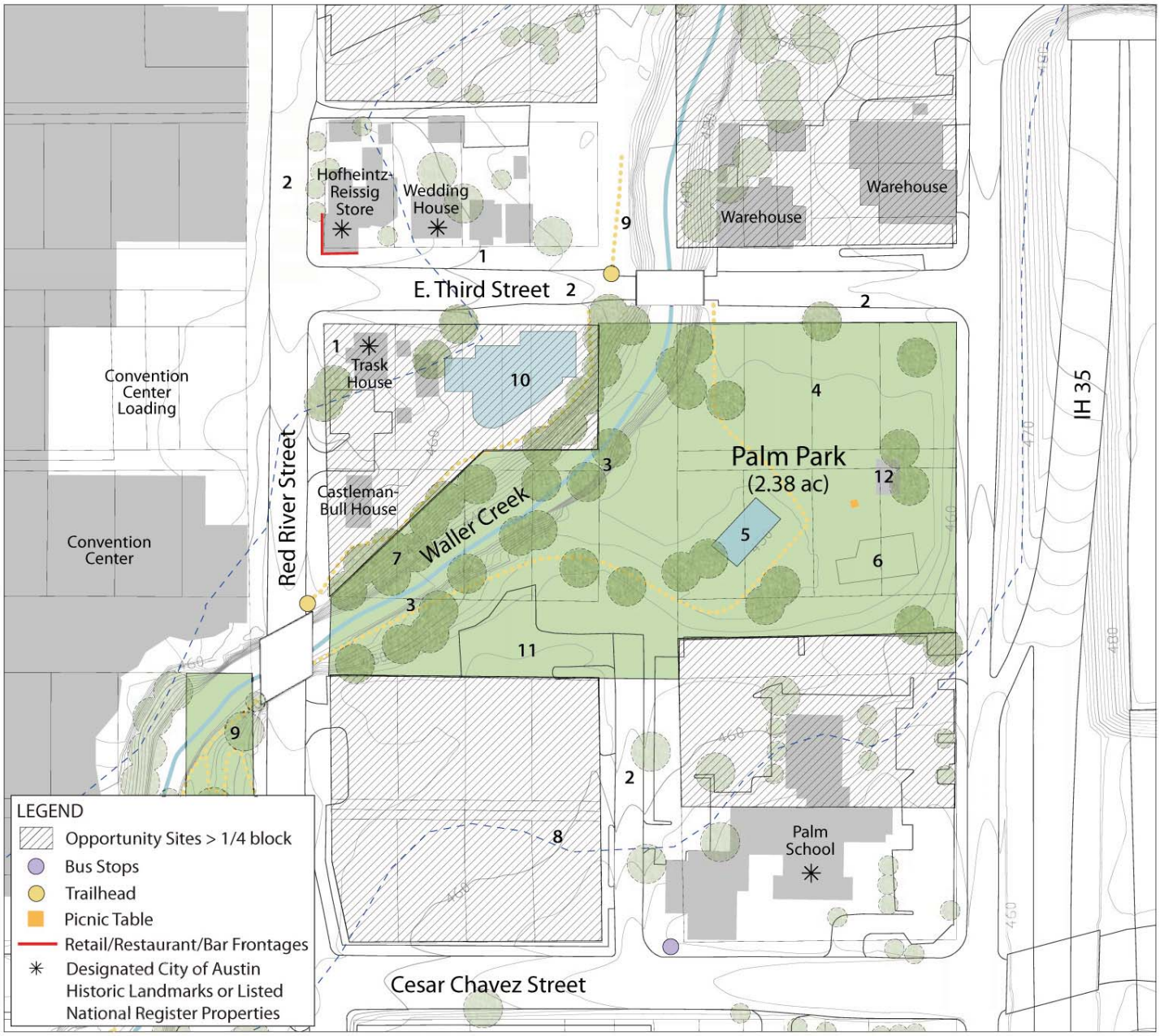
Existing Conditions and Constraints: The park today is one of most underutilized in the entire City system. It suffers from its location next to IH 35, which separates it from the East Austin community and creates an undesirable edge. Very little private investment has occurred in this area, due to its location within the floodplain of Waller Creek, the presence of IH 35 and the Capitol View Corridors that severely limit building heights in the blocks north of the park. The park is not irrigated or well-maintained, and feels forgotten, if not even unsafe due to its lack of human occupation, excepting a few homeless residents. This is the only downtown park that PARD does not rent for special events, due to its marginal environment. However, Palm Park has existing mature trees throughout the park, which, along with the historic restroom building, frame a large flat central area between the creek, that is ideal as a passive open space and events lawn. Waller Creek, if realized as the world-class linear park envisioned, could create an excellent edge to a revitalized Palm Park. If the Waller Creek corridor public improvement projects are funded, an exciting new system of promenades, Great Streets and hike-and-bike paths will converge on Palm Park bringing people from East Austin, UT and from the Lady Bird Lake Greenway. (See Waller Creek Greenway description above.)

Framing Uses and Activities: Today, the park suffers from a poor frame: IH 35 on the east, surface parking lots on the south, abandoned warehouses to the north and the eroded banks of Waller Creek on the west. But, with the Waller Creek Tunnel Project, park-adjacent properties will be removed from the flood plain, allowing them to redevelop and orient toward the park. There is significant redevelopment opportunity around the park, that has the potential of creating a new constituency of park users who will populate and activate the open space on a day-to-day basis. Opportunities for redevelopment could include:

- the "repurposing" of the Travis-County-owned Palm School[8] to the south which could become a community cultural/educational use, whose activities and exhibitions might extend into the park;
- the redevelopment of the privately-owned surface parking lot to the southwest of the park into high-rise residential and/or hotel uses, with ground floor, park-oriented entrances and uses;
- the redevelopment of the warehouse site to the north, which could be ideal for a cultural/museum/gallery use, as Capitol views limit height on this parcel to under 40 feet;
- the preservation and adaptive reuse of the three wooden, one-story historic houses on the north edge of East Third Street into restaurant/retail uses (the Waterloo Compound and potential historic district); and

Palm park suffers from lack of framing and activities.

8 Travis County is currently conducting a facilities assessment of its Downtown properties, which should be complete early in 2010. The County may consider disposing of the property altogether or continuing to house certain services there.



1. Office in historic houses
2. Parallel parking
3. Eroded banks along Waller Creek
4. Open lawn
5. Pool
6. Swings
7. Riparian vegetation
8. Existing 100 year floodplain
9. Existing hike and bike trail
10. Water quality pond
11. Parking lot
12. Restroom building

Palm Park Existing Conditions

- the improvement of the Convention Center-owned site west of Palm Park to remove the surface parking lot, anchor and restore the relocated Castleman-Bull House, and re-using it, along with the Trask House for restaurants with a common terrace overlooking the creek. Ultimately, the Convention Center property should feel and operate like a public open space extension of Palm Park and the Waller Creek Greenway, with its structures functioning as "pavilions in the park" and/or a "tavern on the green".

Long Term Vision and Recommendations: Palm Park's former role as a neighborhood park should evolve to one with a more city-wide function, as its circumstances and surroundings have changed considerably, and will change even more dramatically with investment in flood control, creek-oriented public improvements, and surrounding redevelopment. At the same time, Palm Park should continue to serve as a neighborhood and family-friendly space oriented to both the East Austin community and Downtown. With the planned improvements along Waller Creek, there is a significant opportunity to make Palm Park a more integral part of the downtown park system. With its proximity to the Convention Center and to public parking, significantly-sized special events could be accommodated (e.g., community celebrations, concerts and other performances, art fairs, Convention Center-related functions, a "Swante Palm Book Fair", etc.).

- ***Improve Palm Park as an integral part of the Waller Creek Improvement Project.*** Palm Park should be conceived, designed and implemented as an integral extension of the Waller Creek Improvement project, so that it can fully benefit from the trail and creekside improvements, and so that it can become a more connected part of the downtown park system. Ideally, its improvement should be completed at or near the same time as the Tunnel Project (2014).

- ***Improve the large flat, open area in the park's center*** as an open green suitable for special events as well as day-to-day recreational use.

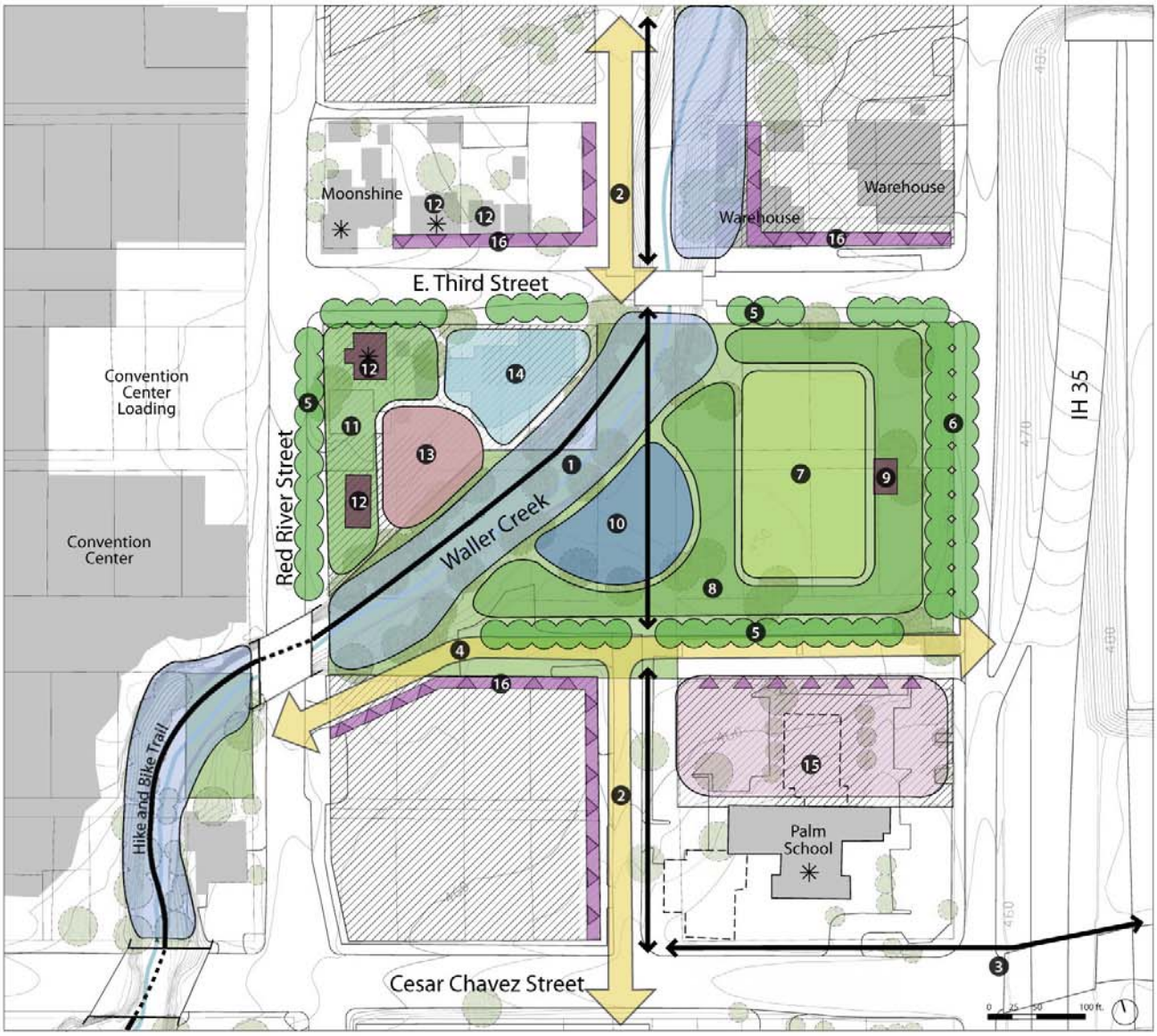
- ***Introduce a major water playground next to Waller Creek*** to create a family attraction that could also have environmental interpretative elements to teach children about water, as they interact and play and experiment with it, and see it in relation to a real Hill Country stream.

Palm park provides an opportunity for family water-oriented activities.

- ***Promote Palm Park as the heart of a creative culture district:*** Palm Park will be the heart of a new sub-district of the Waller Creek District of Downtown, which the DAP is recommending as a "creative culture" district, where creative businesses, venues, studios, workshops, etc., could be located and even incentivized. Palm Park could be an important anchor to such a district, especially if flanked by cultural uses, which could include

KEY GOALS

- Revitalize Palm Park as the premier, family-oriented Downtown park, with recreational, educational and cultural opportunities oriented to children.
- Create stronger connections with the Waller Creek corridor and the Convention Center-owned tract across the creek.
- Facilitate multiple uses of the park's main open space / lawn.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Restore continuous trail and riparian corridor of Waller Creek.
2. Create Sabine Street promenade between 3rd and 4th St. and 2nd St. and Cesar Chavez.
3. Create strong pedestrian connection to East Austin.
4. Extend 2nd Street along southern edge of park.
5. Implement Great Streets sidewalks and street trees.
6. Install double row of street trees along the IH 35 edge .
7. Create open lawn / event space.
8. Maintain flexible and open space for picnicking, etc.
9. Restore historic park restroom building. (e.g. restaurant)
10. Create children's garden with interactive water feature.
11. Remove parking and extend sense of open space.
12. Restore and repurpose historic houses.
13. Create dining terrace.
14. Improve water quality pond to create better interaction with park.
15. Preserve historic portion of Palm School and promote community/cultural use in northern portion of block.
16. Require pedestrian-oriented uses facing park.

Palm Park Improvement Concept

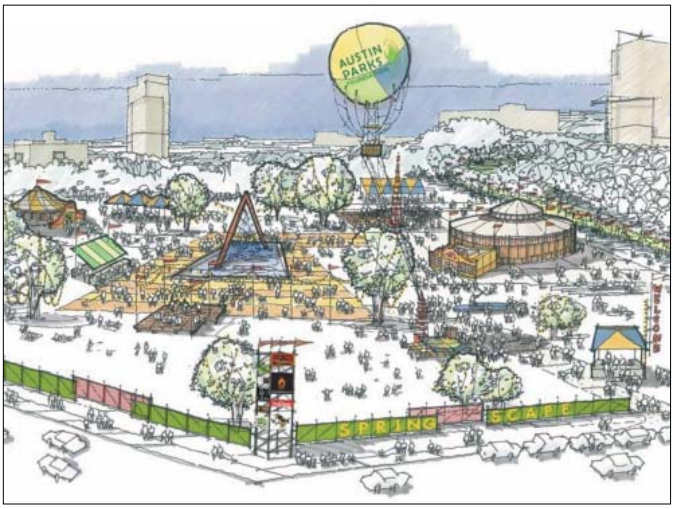
a major museum and/or a community arts center located within the Palm School.

- ***Introduce public art projects in the park and along the creek:*** Stakeholders have suggested a highway-scaled, public art project that could include a landscape element along the IH 35 edge, in order to screen the freeway, and to give a very visible, and landmark identity to the park and the emerging creative district along Waller Creek.

Near Term Investment Recommendations: As part of the Waller Creek District Master Plan, it is recommended that Palm Park be revitalized as part of a major public works investment focused between Lady Bird Lake and Seventh Street.

- ***Raise the awareness and use of the park for special events and celebrations:*** Pending the implementation of longer-term improvements in Palm Park and along Waller Creek, the park should be used for special events as much as possible, with sufficient investment required to ensure its attractiveness for special event rental. Palm Park is located in a low-sensitivity area in terms of amplified sound, being next to IH 35 and relatively distant from existing residential development, so it could be an appropriate venue for amplified music, such as South-by-Southwest (SXSW). A group called Springscape is currently circulating a proposal to use the park as a venue for a six-week set of multi-use attractions, beginning in spring 2011. Under this proposal, Springscape sets up multiple tents, pavilions, gardens and areas that host a large array of attractions for both children (art, slam poetry, circus and performance camps, etc.) and adults (daily happy hours at the "Waller Bar", outdoor dining, live and DJ music, etc.). This kind of seasonal use and other special events could have a near term beneficial effect on the park, as well as provide revenue to PARD for the park's enhanced maintenance. Most importantly, special events at Palm Park could help transform the image of this little-loved park to something that would attract people from all over the city, particularly families with children.

Springscape has a proposal to use the park as a venue for six weeks in the spring of 2011. The setup will include tents, pavilions, gardens and areas that host a range of attractions for children and adults.



2. Waterloo Park

Location and History: Waterloo Park is bounded by East Twelfth Street (formerly College Avenue) on the south, Trinity Street to the west, West Fifteenth Street (formerly North Avenue) on the north and Red River Street on the east. In the 1928 City Plan, the Waterloo Park area was recommended as part of a parkway or boulevard to connect the northeast portion of Austin with the CBD, but it was not until 1978 that the City acquired property for the park, as well as for the adjacent Waller Creek Greenway.

Ownership and Management: PARD owns and maintains Waterloo Park, and its numerous annual events are facilitated through one full-time PARD staff acting as special events coordinator.

Existing Conditions and Constraints: Waterloo Park is ten acres, the largest non-greenway park in the Downtown, yet probably one of the more underutilized and disconnected in the system. Its northeast downtown location feels somewhat isolated, as there is no residential population, only major institutions in the surrounding areas (UT, State Capitol Complex, Brackenridge Hospital Complex). Waterloo Park's mature trees and its eastern edge with a meandering Waller Creek are its greatest open space and natural assets. There is significant topography in the park, resulting in areas that are difficult to occupy and low-lying flood-prone areas below street-level view, creating an insecure feeling in much of the park. Waterloo Park has some dilapidated 1980s improvements, such as elevated wooden decks, a stepped north-south promenade and public restrooms that will be removed as part of the Waller Creek Tunnel Mitigation Project. Commemorative statuary is collected near its parking area in the southern part of the park, which will be relocated elsewhere. As in other parts of the Waller Creek corridor, Waterloo has a significant homeless encampment, which dissuades other day-to-day users from enjoying it.

Framing Uses and Activities: In the area north of Waterloo Park, just south of Fifteenth Street , there are two buildings which now belong to the City's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) Department. One is a three-story building, formerly the Ronald McDonald House, which will be retrofitted for supportive housing units. The second, located at the corner of Fifteenth and Trinity streets is the small, one-story historic Hauke House that will be used to support NHCD activities located in the larger building. These uses are certainly not ideal ones to energize and complement the park, however, there is an opportunity to construct new building(s) to their south, which would front the new Fourteenth Street promenade and create a positive edge for the park with active pedestrian uses (e.g., cafe, tavern, bike station/ shop, etc.) (Note, however, that a portion of this area is within the 100-year floodplain, as it is upstream from the inlet structure.)

Waller Creek traverses Waterloo Park, but the existing paths and infrastructure are degraded and poorly maintained.

Waterloo Park is used for many events throughout the year.

Unfortunately, most of the abutting development on the west, south and east do not provide active park-oriented uses, including: the State parking garages along Trinity Street, the Texas Workforce Commission Building on Twelfth Street, and the Brackenridge Hospital garage and campus east of Red River Street. However, just beyond these garage edges is a large day and night-time population of employees and State Capitol and hospital visitors. In addition, once the creek is revitalized with a better-connecting and more accessible trail system, there will be higher levels of activity within and next to the park. New bicycle lanes are planned for Red River, as well as a "super-route" (a bicycle route with superior comfort and sense of safety as well as a direct route to major destinations) for Twelfth Street, and a multi-use trail through Waterloo Park that will link UT to Downtown. Capital Metro has several bus stops surrounding the open space, which also generate activity and eyes on the park. With these improvements, Waterloo is positioned to become a more successful activity hub.

Current Activities and Programs: Waterloo Park is a major venue for special events and celebrations, rented by PARD to private organizations and non-profit users. In 2008, the park accommodated 15 events over a total of 18 days, including:

- 3M Half-Marathon (January)
- SXSW Artist Village (March)
- Keep Austin Beautiful (April)
- Lone Star State JAM (April)
- Spamarama (April/May)
- Blues on the Green (Summer)
- Ice Cream Festival (August)
- Hot Sauce Festival (August)
- Waterloo Disc Golf Tournament (October)
- Octoberfest (October)
- FunFunFun Fest (November)
- Turkey Trot (Thanksgiving)

The Waterloo Parkland Mitigation Project: Waterloo Park is soon to become the site of the tunnel inlet structure for the Waller Creek Flood Control (Tunnel) Project. As part of the required mitigation for this intervention in parkland, the Tunnel Project includes a "Mitigation Plan", which calls for the following actions to be completed by late 2014, when the tunnel is operational:

- ***Remove all existing structures and parking south of Fourteenth Street.***

- ***Build inlet structure facility with new public parking/plaza area*** accessible from Twelfth Street. Create a shaded rooftop terrace to serve as a gathering place (dining and dancing "under the stars", an event rental facility, and a great place to eat lunch, catch breezes and views).

1. Parallel Parking
2. Bus Parking
3. Bicycle Lane
4. 14-Foot Bicycle Path
5. Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge
6. Pedestrian Bridge
7. Open Lawn with Music Events
8. Tunnel Inlet
9. Shaded Rooftop Plaza
10. Parking Lot
11. Existing 100 Year Floodplain
12. Proposed 100 Year Floodplain
13. Restroom Building

Waterloo Park Mitigation Plan (Prepared by Waller Creek Tunnel Team)

Millennium Park provides a state-of-the-art performance space as well as many other amenities that attract thousands of visitors on a daily basis.

- ***Create a deep lagoon interfacing with the round inlet structure,*** capturing Waller Creek flood waters from upstream.

- ***Create wetlands area in southeast corner of park,*** next to Waller Creek.

- ***Re-grade the open area of the park to create a flatter, elliptically-shaped Events Green*** with stage area and perimeter walkway.

- ***Build a new pedestrian bridge to cross the lagoon,*** connecting the eastern edge of the park with the Events Green.

- ***Create a multi-use pathway system through the park*** that can connect the Trinity/Fifteenth Street corner to the Red River/Twelfth Street corner, using a newly developed promenade, and using the old Fourteenth Street ROW and historic bridge to traverse the park in the east-west direction.

- ***Build a new public restroom building.***

- ***Preserve existing trees or, if necessary, relocate into other areas of the park.***

While PARD has approved the Mitigation Plan with roughly two million dollars worth of improvements, many community members, including the Parks Leadership Team, the Waller Creek Advisory Committee and others have appealed to the City and to PARD to take the time to prepare a more comprehensive master plan for the park, and a more detailed design plan that can fully address its special role in the Downtown and the city. Responsive to these concerns and in agreement with putting forward the extra effort required to ensure that Waterloo Park achieves its potential for a signature downtown park, PARD is convening a series of community workshops to be led by Project for Public Spaces, that will begin later this year and culminate next Spring in a concept plan and program.

Recommendations to Leverage the Mitigation Project Improvements: Many stakeholders participating in the DAP and Waller Creek Master planning processes have viewed Waterloo Park as a not-to-be-missed opportunity to create a signature park similar in stature to Millennium Park in Chicago or Discovery Green in Houston. This vision calls for Waterloo Park to continue to accommodate City-wide and regional events, but in a more functional and commodious way, allowing for better park circulation, accessibility, amenities and improved staging, loading and servicing of events. The following long term recommendations should be considered to extend and complement the improvements called for in the Mitigation Plan, and to ensure that the plan facilitate such future features and activities, (e.g., through

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Construct inlet structure with roof plaza for Waller Creek tunnel.
2. Create pond upstream of inlet structure.
3. Provide parking area and access to inlet building.
4. Create hydrological connection between upper and lower segments of Waller Creek. Preserve riparian corridor.
5. Extend trail north through Waterloo Park and under East 15th Street to connect with UT.
6. Create pedestrian and bicycle promenade along 14th St. Bridge. Add a pedestrian activated signal that allows bikes to transition to Red River St.
7. Implement Great Streets sidewalks and street trees.
8. Create events bus dop-off zone with amenities.
9. Create park gateway area aligned with 13th St.
10. Create open lawn for events and recreational activities.
11. Create a terraced edge that allows visual and physical access to the creek edge.
12. Construct restroom building.
13. Re-grade area and introduce a 'nature playground'.
14. Create vegetated slope.
15. Maintain riparian vegetation.
16. Create healing garden with strong pedestrian connections to hospital.
17. Provide park-oriented concessions with terrace and possible play area.
18. Provide live/work housing with cafe at corner of 15th and Trinity Streets.
19. Require pedestrian-oriented uses facing park.

Waterloo Park Improvement Concept

grading, utility infrastructure, etc.), even if these are not able to be delivered by the Mitigation Project itself.

- ***Develop a café/retail building along the north edge of the Fourteenth Street promenade.***

- ***Create family-friendly and child-oriented amenities.***

- ***Create more gently sloped or terraced banks down to the creek on both its east and west sides.***

- ***Create a "healing garden" as an amenity to Brackenridge Hospital visitors and patients.***

- ***Implement Great Streets improvements on all four boundary streets of the park.***

- ***Create a safe mid-block crossing on Red River Street aligned with the Fourteenth Street bridge to better connect the hospital to the park, and allow cyclists to transition from the park path to the in-street bike lanes on Red River.***

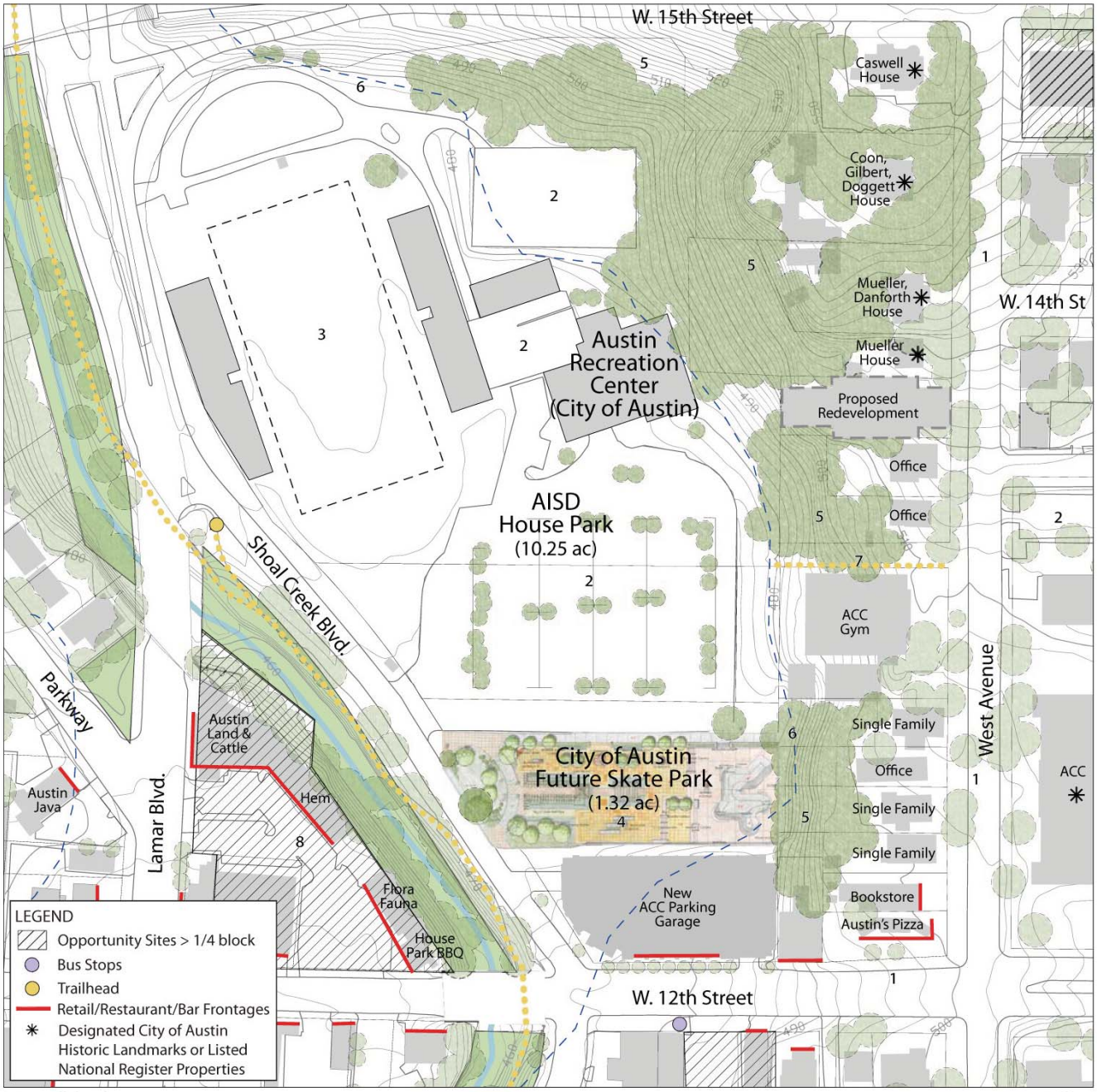
3. House Park Skate Park and Austin Recreation Center

Location and History: House Park is located in the extreme northwest corner of Downtown, at the intersection of the Lamar Boulevard/Shoal Creek Boulevard and West Fifteenth Street. The City of Austin portion of "House Park" is actually very small and was donated to the City by E. M. House in 1903, and in 1931, W. T Caswell built the Austin Athletic Club as a private club. This building became property of PARD and in 1970, its name was changed to the Austin Recreation Center. During the Memorial Day Flood of 1981, the building sustained extreme damage. By 1986, PARD opened a new facility north of the existing parking lot from the old building. The ailing 1931 structure was recently demolished to make way for PARD's new skate and BMX park, designed by New Line Skate Parks, Inc.

Ownership and Management: The City of Austin owns the Austin Recreation Center Building, and owns the small tract where the Skate Park will be constructed. The balance of the land associated with House Park is owned by AISD, including the stadium facility and surface parking lot. PARD and AISD have an agreement about the joint use of the surface parking lot. PARD will build and manage the new skate park, which was noted as a priority in PARD's Long Range Plan.

Existing Conditions and Constraints: Because this park is located in the extreme edge of Downtown, next to two busy arterial roads (West Fifteenth and Lamar), and because it is has almost no open space associated with it, House Park cannot truly be considered a Downtown-serving park. Its constituency is Central Austinites rather than Downtowners. The park is mostly known for the AISD-owned stadium which supports high school football and most recently, Aztex semi-professional soccer club matches, both bringing in spectators from all over Austin. PARD's Austin Recreation Center provides a great variety of activities and classes with its indoor gym and classrooms, such as martial arts, basketball, volleyball, dance, Jazzercise, indoor soccer, etc. To the south of the central surface parking lot and the future skate park, Austin Community College (ACC) has recently completed a new parking garage for its students, located immediately south of the future Skate Park. However, the addition of what promises to be a landmark skate and BMX park, and with House Park's connection to the Shoal Creek Greenway and trail system, House Park will be brought into focus as a much more significant destination. As House Park and its environs comprise a large area of densely-programmed public activities, with many different kinds and ages of users arriving from all parts of town, PARD staff has noted the need to improve the transportation and parking, both on site and surrounding the park.

The Austin Recreation Center provides a variety of activities and classes for Central Austinites.



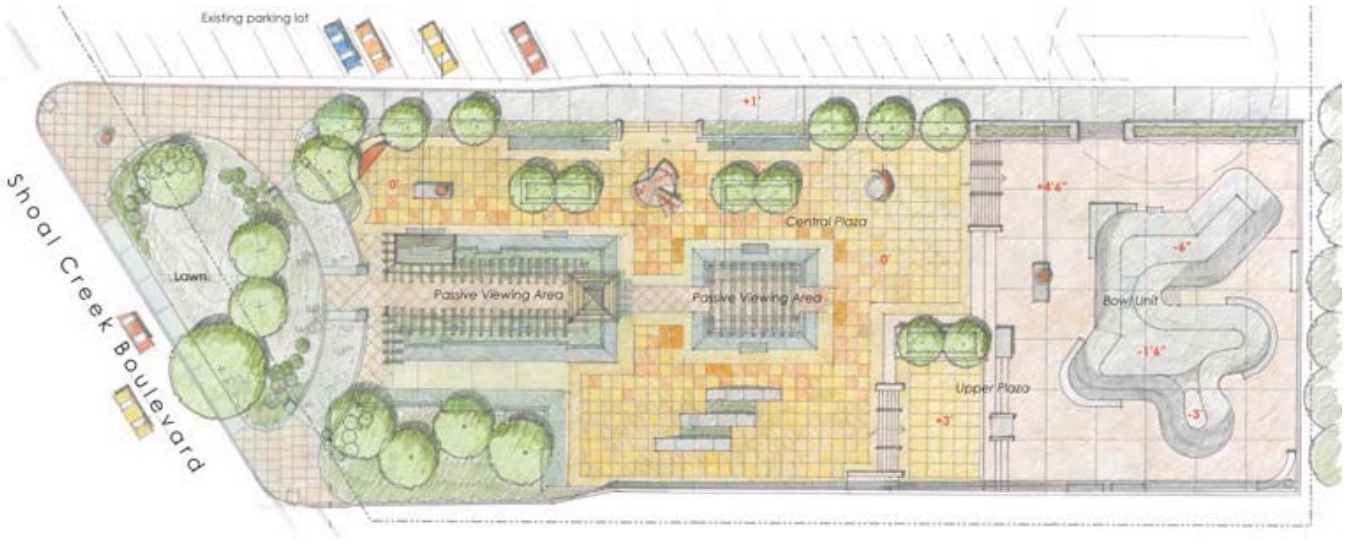
1. Parallel parking
2. Parking lot
3. Sports field
4. Skate park
5. Steep slope
6. Existing 100-year floodplain
7. Public stair
8. Shopping Center (retail, restaurants)

House Park Skate Park and Austin Recreation Center Existing Conditions

Long Term Vision and Recommendations: House Park and the adjacent AISD-owned recreational spaces are already maximized in terms of programmed activities. What appears to be most needed is a more well-defined and aesthetic, on-site circulation system, for buses and vans, private vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. If some of the surface parking and drives could be reduced in size and given over to landscaped areas and islands, it would increase the visual appeal of the park. In addition, the park edges along Shoal Creek and Lamar boulevards should be planted with street trees and receive a true "Great Streets" treatment, befitting a park edge.

Near Term Investment Recommendations: PARD, ACC and AISD should work together to conduct an overall master plan for the jointly-used overall site and its environs that addresses transportation and parking (as described above), open space, connectivity, "re-capturing of open space", etc. The PARD Long Range Plan calls for constructing a playscape associated with the Austin Recreation Center. This should be integrated into the joint master planning process.

The new skate and BMX park will generate daily activity and attract people from all over Austin.

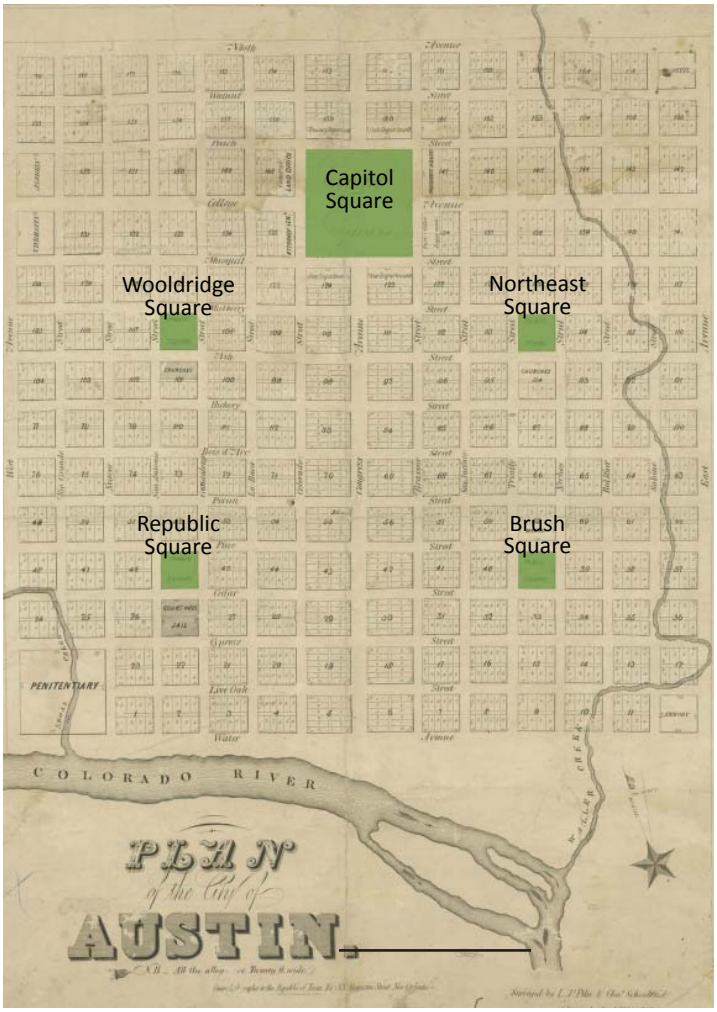


C. Historic Squares

As part of the Edwin Waller's 1839 original city plan, four public squares were designated, each occupying an entire city block, and each located in the center of a "quadrant" of the new city, south of the designated Capitol Building site and on either side of Congress Avenue, the main ceremonial street connecting the Capitol with the river. Waller used William Penn's utopian city plan for Philadelphia as a model, rather than the traditional Spanish city layout of nearby San Antonio. Civic uses were planned to surround or frame the squares, reinforcing their intended role as community gathering places, as well as public open spaces. Today, only three of these squares remain: Brush Square, Republic Square and Wooldridge Square. The fourth square in the northeast quadrant of the Waller Plan (known herein as "the Northeast Square"), was sold in the 1960s and is now occupied by the First Baptist Church. The four squares were not immediately developed as public parks or open space, however each has a unique history and evolution.

The three remaining historic squares are actually owned by the State of Texas who allows the City use of the parks. PARD manages and maintains the historic squares.

The 1839 Waller Plan designated four squares, three of which remain today.



1. Brush Square

Location and History: In 1888, Brush Square was named after a prominent Austin merchant, who may have stored cotton on the site. It is bounded by East Fifth Street (formerly Pine Street) to the north, East Fourth Street (formerly Cedar Street) to the south, Neches Street to the east and Trinity Street to the west. The 1839 Waller Plan designated the half-block to the north of Brush Square for a public market, and it appears that it served as such, perhaps overflowing into the square itself.[9] An 1872 map of Austin designates this same half-block as a "Railroad Depot for Passengers", providing for the newly established (1871) rail service to Houston and Galveston. Although a depot was never constructed here, the "Depot Hotel" was built in the block immediately east of it, facing Fifth Street.

By 1894, the entire square was used by the Alliance Cotton Yard, and a "public square" was shown on the Sanborn insurance maps on the half block to the north. Reference to this square

9 Serovy and Holleran. Brush Square History and Design Study. UT Historic Preservation Program. February 2008.

disappeared by 1900, while Alliance Cotton Yard continued use of the space. In the first 1928 City Plan and zoning ordinance for Austin, Brush Square was described as a "neighborhood park". The Plan recommended that a new fire station be built in this vicinity, and by 1939 a public firehouse was constructed within the northeast corner of Brush Square, where it remains today and operates as the downtown-serving Fire Station #1. It also houses a small collection of artifacts known as the Austin Fire Museum. Several additions to the original structure have since been made, including a large, fenced-in surface parking lot to its south. As a result, almost the entire western half of Brush Square is occupied by the Fire Department. The building is likely eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, for its architecture and its significance as a civic building.

The Austin Fire Department building and parking lot occupy most of the western half of the block.

In 1934, the O. Henry House/Museum, (built in 1888 and occupied for two-years by the short-story writer William Sydney Porter and his family), was moved to the northeast quadrant of Brush Square, next door to the Fire Station. It was moved from nearby Fourth Street, and was eventually renovated by PARD as the O. Henry Museum, interpreting the life and times of O. Henry (Porter's nom de plume). The O. Henry House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, for its association with the writer and for its architecture. In 2002 the Susanna Dickinson House was moved to the northeast corner of the Square. The house and detached kitchen belonging to Dickinson, the sole Anglo survivor of the battle at the Alamo, were discovered during demolition of existing structures on the site of the present Convention Center Hotel, in the block east of Brush Square. The Friends of Brush Square group is restoring the house and kitchen as the Susanna Dickinson-Hannig Museum, which should be complete by 2010. The house was determined to be eligible for the National Register due to its association with a significant historical figure.

In 2009, Capital Metro completed its temporary terminus station for the Metro Rail, the 30-mile commuter rail line linking Leander to downtown Austin, with service to begin in 2010. The transit agency has mitigated for the removal of trees and made streetscape improvements on the south edge of the square, including new street trees and benches. Capital Metro buses will meet the commuter rail train during morning and evening commute hours, with bus stops located on Fifth Street, Trinity Street and Fourth Street.

Construction of the Lance Armstrong Bikeway has recently been completed within the Fourth Street right-of-way, at the curb edge of the Convention Center sidewalk across from Brush Square. The Bikeway is a signature facility with dedicated lanes, designed for cyclists commuting into Downtown from east and west.

The annual O. Henry Pun-Off attracts a large crowd to Brush Square and creates a lively atmosphere.

Existing Conditions and Constraints: Although Brush Square is dedicated parkland, it is dominated by the existing structures and the fire station parking lot, which significantly detract from the sense of open space. The residual open space is underutilized and is in poor condition. The Fire Station operations and its parking lot particularly limit the possible activities, functionality and beauty of this space. There are exceptional Live oak trees on the Square, clustered to the south of the O. Henry and Susanna Dickinson houses, creating a shady canopy that will help to define an "interpretative" courtyard currently being developed through the City's Arts in Public Places (AIPP) Program. This space will provide a setting for the educational programs of the two museums. There is a three to five-foot grade change from the higher mid-block point of the square down to Fourth Street which will need to be addressed in the final park planning and design.

Framing Uses and Activities: The Convention Center on the south, the Hilton Hotel and Residences to the east, the Marriott on the west and The Avenue Lofts to the north together create a positive and uninterrupted "frame" - perhaps the strongest one present in the downtown parks system. The Metro Rail line, its connecting buses, the Hilton taxi stand and the Lance Armstrong Bikeway all come together to make Brush Square an important transportation hub, bringing much activity and giving many visitors their first impression of Downtown. Several organized activities contribute to the current programming of the open space, including the annual O. Henry Pun-Off, the SXSW festival and live music and tented, private parties. With the renovation of the Susana Dickinson House and the adjacent courtyard improvements, Brush Square is honing its identity as a cultural destination, which is reinforced by its proximity to the Convention Center. Already an attraction for students visiting the museum, conventioneers and tourists, the park improvements will also allow park and museum visitors to relax in a more intimately-scaled outdoor space, a place altogether rare in Downtown and in Austin.

Long Term Vision and Recommendations: A significant amount of thinking about Brush Square's future has already occurred, thanks to the efforts of the Friends of Brush Square. Over the last few years, this group gathered input from many stakeholders, including PARD, APF, Capital Metro, Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB), the Hilton, the Fire Department, local residents and others, in an effort to develop an appropriate role and identity for the park, which was articulated within a slide presentation developed in 2009.[10] The vision of the Square is that of "a nature tonic for city people and a culture club for neighbors and visitors". This encapsulates the desire to create a relaxed, welcome-to-all, naturalistic and blooming landscape, and a place that serves smaller-scaled events of a cultural

10 Miller and Schonzeit. Brush Square Park: Design Evolution 2008-2009 (Powerpoint presentation with film clips.)

1. Parallel parking
2. Future AIPP project
3. Temporary metro rail stop
4. Future double-track rail extension
5. Parking lot with fence
6. Open lawn

Brush Square Existing Conditions

nature, (e.g., live music, teaching, public art and art-making, writing, gardening, etc.). Of paramount importance is that Brush Square function as a casual respite and refuge on a daily basis. While stakeholders are very supportive of SXSW as part of the vital Austin scene, many have reservations about its use for private, tented receptions and parties, which some see as incompatible and indifferent to the park. Long term recommendations include:

- ***Find a new location for the Austin Fire Department (AFD)*** so that the full potential of Brush Square can be realized. Ultimately, the fire station building should be repurposed as a community-oriented building such as a "Firehouse Café and Museum", with an outdoor dining terrace overlooking the open space.

- ***Introduce an open green on the southern half of the block,*** once the AFD parking lot is removed. This space could accommodate Convention Center and hotel functions, as well as private events, such as weddings and birthdays, but also be designed to serve casual, daily users.

Near Term Investment Recommendations: Although the full potential of Brush Square cannot be realized until Fire Department operations cease in the Square and its parking lot is removed, there are opportunities for interim improvements that would greatly enhance the role and appearance of the park:

- ***Work with the AFD to reduce the footprint of the parking lot:*** The Friends of Brush Square, APF and PARD have initiated discussions with the Fire Department to reduce the size of the parking lot, which would provide for a larger open lawn, making the Square feel more "whole", and allowing it to function as a more viable public space. Introduction of attractive metal fencing and landscaping around the parking lot should be part of the plan.

- ***Introduce activities that enhance the neighborhood and social appeal of the space.*** In addition to its role as an events space for the Convention Center and nearby hotels, activities that strengthen its neighborhood appeal should be introduced. For example, a bocce ball court in the linear space along Fourth Street has been suggested as a way to help to activate this edge and bring a new constituency of stewards to the square.

- ***Provide for outdoor dining vendors within or adjacent to the park:*** During the DAP Brush Square workshop, the desire for quick lunch food was expressed, which, in the near term, could be in the form of mobile food vendor(s) that could possibly use the bus loading areas (which are vacant except during morning and evening commute hours), thereby not intruding on the already limited space of the park. This location would

Brush Square is an ideal location for a bike rental facility, similar to the Paris Velib program below.

provide a convenient food option for the adjacent Convention Center users and would promote an exchange of activity between the Convention Center and park. Eating in the park would require little capital investment (i.e., only limited landscaping, furnishings and a drinking fountain) and would be the type of daily activity that could help establish the park as a more positive public space.

As in New York City's Bryant Park, an open and flexible lawn could accommodate both casual, daily users and events of different sizes.

- ***Consider the introduction of bicycle rental facilities:*** The addition of a bike rental facility (similar to the highly successful Velib program in Paris) would be particularly appropriate at Brush Square, as it could extend the commuter rail system, connect cyclists directly to the Lance Armstrong Bikeway and the future Waller Creek multi-use paths, promote tourism by bike and reinforce the message of Austin as a bike-forward community.

- ***Introduce a double row of shade trees along the Fourth Street edge:*** A double-row of shade trees with seating for transit patrons (as well as park visitors) is recommended to create an appropriate buffer/edge between the park and the transit operation. The introduction of a low seat wall along the sidewalk should be designed in anticipation of the ultimate grading of the park, once the AFD is relocated. (See possible on-street bus transfer station layout in Wooldridge Square section.)

- ***Introduce a raised deck area to protect the live oak tree:*** Similar to the deck being implemented in Republic Square, this feature could also be a place for casual eating (moveable tables and chairs), as well as a stage for events.

- ***Take immediate action to improve tree health and provide irrigation throughout the park.***

KEY GOALS FOR THE LONG TERM

- Create a visitor-oriented park with a cultural emphasis, that also supports daily use by nearby residents and employees.
- Maintain and enhance the park as a landscaped green refuge in the city.
- Ensure that the park can support a variety of types and sizes of events and gatherings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Re-purpose fire station building and consider decreasing footprint.
2. Create cafe terrace around building.
3. Create multi-use open lawn.
4. Extend kiosk terrace and add additional vendor.
5. Create landscaped area and/or terrace.
6. Construct raised deck to protect live oak tree.
7. Create accessible path that connects Trinity St and Neches St. Create connection to O. Henry Museum entrance.
8. Extend the courtyard to the south.
9. Implement Great Streets sidewalks and street trees.

Brush Square Long Term Improvement Concept

KEY GOALS FOR THE NEAR TERM

- Reduce the impact of the AFD parking lot, both visually and spatially.
- Accommodate better day-to-day, informal use of the square.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Complete the AIPP Courtyard Project.
2. Reduce AFD parking to more compact footprint with high-quality fencing.
3. Provide colorful planting to screen parking.
4. Create open lawn with irrigation.
5. Plant second row of trees with benches.
6. Re-grade and construct Bocce Ball Court.
7. Introduce one or two food kiosks for affordable, quick food vending.
8. Construct accessible paths from courtyard to Susana Dickinson and O. Henry entrances.
9. Landscape area to provide welcoming entrance to park from E. 5th St. and attractive area for firefighters.
10. Require pedestrian-oriented uses facing park.

Brush Square Near Term Improvement Concept

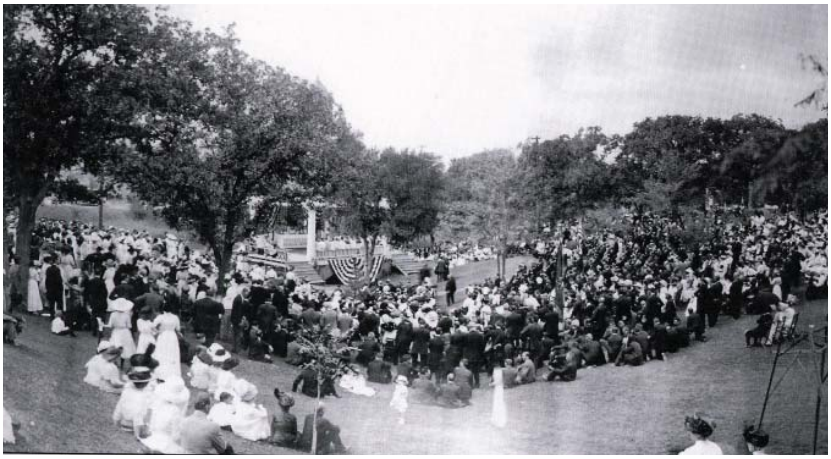
2. Wooldridge Square

Location and History: Wooldridge Square is located in the northwest quadrant of the original city plan, southwest of the Capitol Square site. It is bounded by Tenth Street on the north (formerly Mulberry Street), Guadalupe Street on the east, Ninth Street on the south (formerly Ash Street) and San Antonio Street on the west. In the Waller Plan, the Square was planned to be flanked with churches on its south and was destined to serve as the focal point of Austin's first residential neighborhood. However, for 70 years, the dedicated public square did not become a park, and in the early 20th century, it was used as a dump, perhaps because of its depressed physical form.

In 1909, Austin's Mayor Wooldridge initiated and completed the effort to transform the space into a true park and civic space, including a series of ponds created by damming the existing brook running through the park. In the following year, a pergola-covered bandstand was dedicated, and the Statesman newspaper remarked on the park's "suitability for public speaking" as well its capacity to "comfortably seat between 2,000 and 3,000 people", noting that "in all parts of the park the slightest word or faintest note of music could be heard".[11] Upon its completion, Friday evening concerts were held at the bandstand for over 20 years, and the park became the preferred forum for political speeches and rallies. In the 1928 City Plan, Wooldridge Park was described as a "neighborhood park" and was considered attractive and well-kept, a beauty spot and breathing place". In 1971, a Texas Historical Marker was dedicated at the Park.

Existing Conditions and Constraints: The most remarkable physical characteristic of Wooldridge Square is its depressed topography, forming a steep bowl and an amphitheater-like shape. Mature trees in clusters throughout most of the park create a pleasant environment, although the southwest quadrant, which is the deepest part of the bowl, is fairly barren with eroded slopes where runoff is funneled to a large area drain. Today, the historic wooden bandstand/pavilion still stands near the center of the depressed area of the park. It has been repaired and somewhat altered through the years, but still maintains its architectural integrity. A lockable storage area has been built underneath the bandstand. A random mix of furnishings are scattered throughout the park: picnic tables, benches, a few trash bins. The park's main users are transient, who congregate to meet the Mobile Loaves and Fishes van, which serves lunch and dinner from San Antonio Street every day.

Wooldridge Square has a history of being used as a gathering space, like the dedication of the bandstand in 1910.



11 Harpman, Sowell, Koenig. Wooldridge Square Site Study. The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture. 2007.

Framing Uses and Activities: The block to the south of Wooldridge Square was obtained from the Texas Legislature in 1913 for a public library, which was completed in 1933 and served as Austin's central library until 1979. The building now houses the collection of the Austin History Center (AHC), which has become a stakeholder and a "Friend of Wooldridge Park". The AHC has held events in the park and would like to engage it more, but the relative topography of the two sites makes it difficult for activity to flow between the two areas.

The Travis County Courthouse faces the square and creates an opportunity for an exchange of activity between the park and building.

The Travis County downtown campus, on the other hand, is teeming with employees, judges, jurors and all kinds of services throughout buildings on the north, east and west sides of the Square. The County sees the park as the heart of their future, revitalized downtown campus, and appreciates being identified with Wooldridge Square. On the north face of the Square, the County's 1930 Art Deco style Herman Marion Sweatt Courthouse is the architectural gem of their campus, a great civic building which addresses both the Square and Guadalupe Street. The Courthouse was expanded in the 1950s and 1960s, a jail and an annex were added, and San Antonio Street, between Tenth and Eleventh was closed in order to consolidate the complex of buildings and facilitate the secure movement of prisoners. The building was recorded as a Texas Historic Landmark in 1993. In 2001, the high-rise Blackwell-Thurman Criminal Justice Center was constructed to the west.

Currently, the County is undergoing a facilities assessment and master planning process for its complex, with the intention of building significant new court facilities in this vicinity. Several of their properties may be redeveloped (e.g., the Holt, USB, Ned Granger and Rusk Buildings), however, Capitol View Corridors severely limit building heights on the entire block to the east of Wooldridge Square. The southern half of the block to the east of the park is owned by Bank of America and is used as a drive-through banking facility. It is unlikely that this half of the block will redevelop, as the maximum height of buildings on this site ranges from nine to 25 feet.

On the half-block to the west of the park, Travis County constructed a five-story parking garage for employees. On the half-block to the south of the parking garage is a single-family home that appears to be unoccupied. This quarter-block site is one of the few sites around the park with an opportunity for higher density uses that could create a more vibrant and active edge to the park.

Current Programs and Activities: Wooldridge Square has some regular activities, but the overall programming of the park is lacking. Currently, programmed activities include: Saturday giant chess, summer concert series, Cinco de Mayo celebrations and Juneteenth celebrations.

1. Parallel parking
2. Historic band stand
3. Water fountain
4. Steep slope

Wooldridge Square Existing Conditions

Long Term Vision and Recommendations: The newly formed group "Friends of Wooldridge Square" is in the process of developing a vision for the park. Although a consensus position has not yet been established, some common themes are emerging: the natural character of the park with its rolling topography and its mature tree clusters should be maintained; the historic and cultural significance of the square should be preserved and highlighted, including the central gazebo; and its traditional role as a space for smaller-scaled activities, such as "giant chess", theatrical performances, concerts and civic celebrations, should be enhanced. The usability and accessibility of the park should be improved and redevelopment around the square should be promoted to create a stronger population of park users and stewards. Long-term investment recommendations include the following:

- ***Create a more usable and accessible meadow in the southwest quadrant of the park,*** through sensitive re-grading that would allow for more direct pedestrian access to the park from the sidewalk. The current grade-change discourages use of this part of the park. Re-grading will require careful treatment to preserve existing trees and to provide for drainage. For example, the construction of a bio-filtration meadow, which would "fill" the space and provide for a more sustainable method of drainage could be considered.

- ***Create an accessible path through the park, from the southeast to the northwest corner.*** As part of the grading improvements of the park, it would be possible to create an accessible walkway suitable for mobility-impaired people, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A path with less than a five percent slope, not requiring handrails, should be designed as part of the natural setting of the park and its topography.

- ***Enhance opportunities for the use of the northeast quadrant of the park for informal amphitheater seating:*** Grading improvements should be undertaken to enhance the viability and comfort of the "bowl" for performance seating. Consideration should be given to slope re-grading and/or the introduction of terraced seating that could make the venue more suitable and comfortable for community-oriented events.

- ***Preserve the existing bandstand as part of a more viable and accessible stage area.*** The current bandstand is difficult to access, dissuading many event organizers from choosing Wooldridge Square as a venue. An expanded central stage area should be created, while still allowing the bandstand to be an important focal point in the park, whether it is located "center stage" or in another strategic position in the park.

Giant chess is one of the few activities that attracts people to the park on a regular basis.

- ***Introduce a more active plaza and café on the northwest corner of the park:*** The flatter topography in the vicinity of 10th and San Antonio Streets offers the opportunity to introduce activities that the County Courthouse and garage are unable to provide. It is recommended that this area be designed as a small informal plaza and gathering space, preserving the existing tree canopy, and introducing a small concession or café that can activate the park. Such a facility could serve County employees, jurors and park visitors, and help provide permanent oversight and "eyes" on the open space.

Near Term Investment Recommendations: Recognizing that these long-term recommendations may take a period of time to be funded and implemented, the following near-term actions are proposed:

- ***Introduce an affordable, quick food offering in the park,*** through mobile carts, a food van or semi-permanent kiosk at the northwest corner of the park, where there is a flat space and shade that could provide a place for dining on moveable furnishings.

- ***Make moveable tables and chairs available for public use.*** (These could be stored under the bandstand.)

- ***Introduce Great Streets and transit improvements:*** If Capital Metro implements improved and more frequent bus service along Guadalupe Street as planned, Great Streets improvements should be made in concert with bus shelter construction. Special care should be taken to assure that the pedestrian circulation of the park and the public right-of-way does not conflict with that of bus patrons and that the transit area is clearly defined within the public right-of-way rather than spilling into the park. (See the proposed on street bus transfer station on the following page.)

- ***Work with Travis County to construct public restrooms.*** Consideration should be given to constructing public restrooms within the footprint of the County's existing San Antonio parking garage, as part of a larger downtown strategy to provide public restrooms in public garages near public parks and major destinations. Rather than freestanding structures that consume open space area and create management and nuisance issues, parking garages could provide the opportunity to integrate restrooms at less cost and impact.

Informal amphitheater seating would enhance Wooldridge Square as a gathering place for events and performances.

KEY GOALS

- Preserve the historic role and landscape character of the square.
- Improve the accessibility, usability and safety.
- Promote redevelopment and active uses around the square.

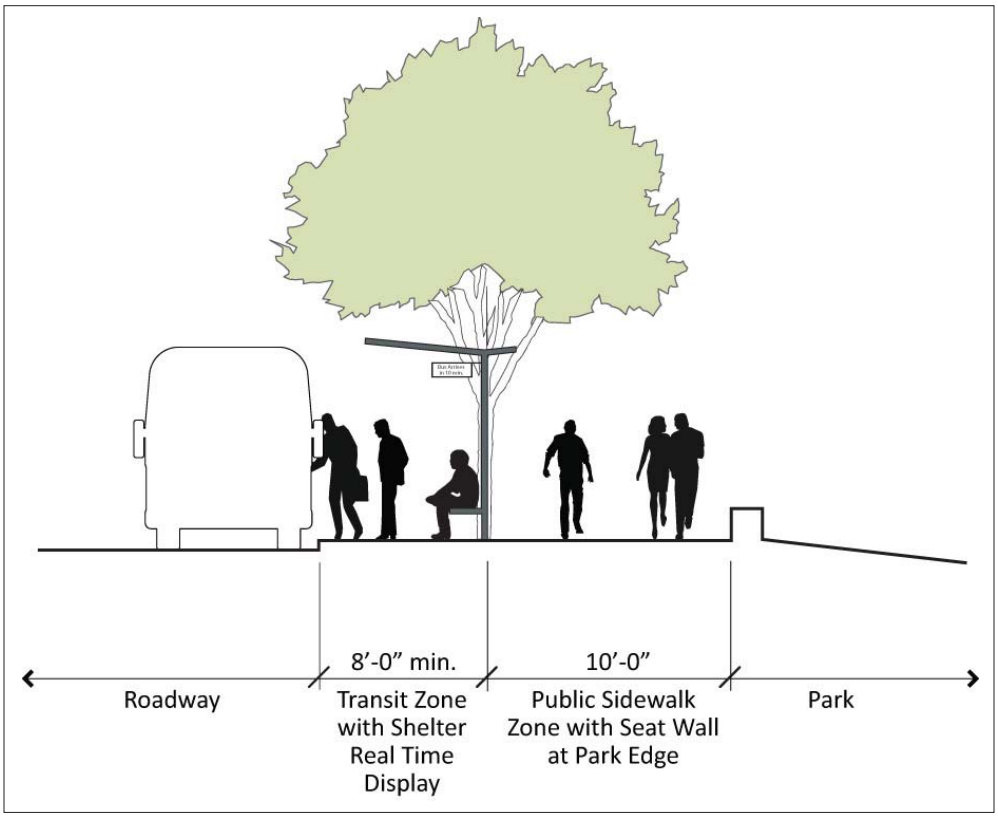
SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

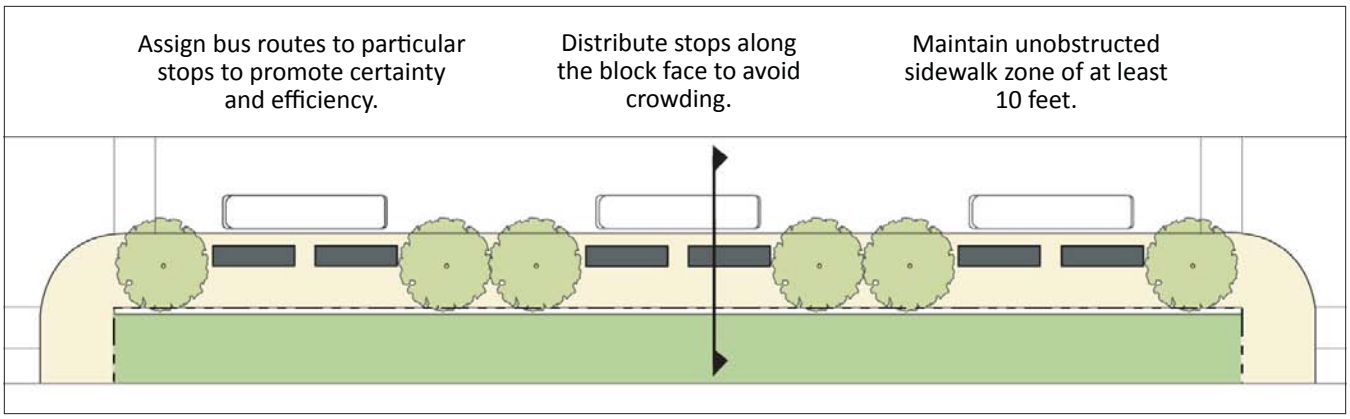
1. Implement Great Streets sidewalks and street trees.
2. Provide bus shelters along Guadalupe Street (CMTA).
3. Introduce food kiosk with seating.
4. Create shady informal gathering area.
5. Leave area as unprogrammed open green space.
6. Fill and re-grade area to create more usable meadow.
7. Re-grade and shape to enhance amphitheater-like setting.
8. Create ample and accessible stage area.
9. Preserve historic bandstand and integrate into stage design.
10. Create an accessible path through the park.
11. Require pedestrian-oriented uses facing park.
12. Keep West 10th Street open to traffic.
13. Consider constructing public restrooms within existing garage.

Wooldridge Square Improvement Concept

- ***Develop interpretive exhibits that celebrate the history of Wooldridge Square:*** Through the AIPP, and with the support of the Austin History Center, Travis County and Capital Metro, a series of photographic interpretative exhibits should be developed to tell the story of Wooldridge Square and the surrounding area.

- ***Take immediate action to improve tree health, and provide irrigation throughout the park.***





Possible On-Street Bus Transfer Station Layout

3. Republic Square

Location and History: Republic Square is the southwestern square in Waller's 1839 City Plan. This full block square is bounded by West Fifth Street on the north (formerly Pine Street), Guadalupe Street to the east, West Fourth Street to the south (formerly Cedar Street) and San Antonio Street to the west. Waller proposed the half-block site to the south for a courthouse, which was eventually built in 1855, and a jail in the southern half of this block, which was never constructed. The park contains the historic Auction Oaks in the southwest corner, where the 1839 and 1840 auctions of the lots depicted in the 1839 Waller Plan were held. The park was integral to the life of the Mexican community who settled and worked in this area in the mid to late 19th century. Their church, Our Lady of Guadalupe Cathedral, was built in the 1890s on the block north of the square, and key events and celebrations from the church spilled out into the park. By 1925, the square was described as a "redeeming spot", and was apparently very well-kept, covered with grass, various kinds of shrubbery and several large shade trees. It was furnished with "seats" and was well-used by the neighborhood.[12]

In the 1928 City Plan for Austin, the Square was described as a "neighborhood park" and by 1935[13], reference to the park as "Hemphill Square" is found. In the 1950s, the City of Austin removed curbs surrounding the park and constructed a public parking lot. In the 1970s, the Sierra Club and PARD began work on plans for the restoration of the park function in the square, making the Auction Oaks and a new fountain its focal points. In 1974, the restored park was opened and named Republic Square, in tribute to the Republic of Texas. In 2002, PARD began Diez y Seis celebrations, as an acknowledgement that these celebrations were held in the Square from the 1870s to 1927.

Existing Conditions and Constraints: Republic Square is currently undergoing the first phase of a major revitalization. The first phase removed the berms created in the 1970s project, nurtured the Auction Oaks back to health, removed street trees in poor health and built a deck that will protect their roots and provide a gathering place and stage area.

A deck around the historic Auction Oaks was built to protect the roots and provide a gathering space.

Framing Uses and Activities: The Square suffers today from little immediate occupation of the abutting properties, however, there is an interesting mix of new developments taking shape around it. The Federal Government has begun construction of a major new courthouse on the full bock to the west. This project will close San Antonio Street to public vehicular traffic, but will still allow pedestrians and bicycles to flow through. This street closure will enhance the connection between this new civic building and the park and will allow for

12 From *The Mexican Population of Austin, Texas* publication.
13 From 1935 Sanborn insurance maps.

1. Parallel Parking
2. Open Sloped Lawn
3. Historic Auction Oaks
4. Historic four parks interpretive plate corner marker
5. The grove
6. Flagstone walk
7. Great Streets sidewalks with bald cypress street trees
8. Stone deck with seating
9. Proposed street closure

Republic Square Existing Conditions (Park Design by TBG)

public open space activities and events to be staged in the vacated 80-foot right-of-way. The Sustainable Food Center, which currently conducts their Saturday Farmers Market in the park and in Fourth Street, will take place in the San Antonio right-of-way, as well as in the park in the future. On the blocks to the northwest and north of the Square, two high-rise, mixed-use development featuring residential and hotel respectively are planned. On the half-block to the east, another mixed-use high-rise residential project is planned, and on the Austin Museum of Art (AMOA)-owned block to the south, an office tower next to a new home for AMOA is envisioned.

Current Programs and Activities: Republic Square has been the most successful downtown park in terms of ongoing programming and care. Currently, the following activities take place regularly:

- Saturday Farmers Market by Sustainable Food Center
- Movies in the Park
- Diez y Seis celebrations
- Yoga in the Park
- Austin City Limits bus staging and public queuing for transit to Zilker Park
- 2009 Solar Concert series

Long Term Vision and Recommendations: A comprehensive planning process for Republic Square has already been conducted to establish a new organizational framework that will "reset" the park and allow this revitalized park to evolve through time. Thanks to the sustained community involvement efforts of PARD, APF, DANA, DAA and others, the programming and planning efforts of Project for Public Spaces (2006-2007) funded by the Federal GSA, and a master plan and first phase park design developed by TBG Partners, construction is now underway to realize the first phase of a multi-phase project. The park's key focal point is the historic Auction Oaks, separating and distinguishing them from other landscape elements in the park by a large, open lawn area running northwest to southeast. Ultimately, a large grove of trees on the east edge of the park will create a shady refuge from the downtown urban environment. The park will feel complete at the end of the first phase, but the grove and other amenities could be added once committed federal funding from the Courthouse is received.

Since the opening of the Farmers Market in 2003, thousands of shoppers visit the market every Saturday.

As a result of additional stakeholder input through this master planning process, additional recommendations are offered for consideration at Republic Square:

- ***Seek funding to implement the full program of improvements for the Square.***

- ***Construct Great Streets improvements on all three street sides of the park,*** including the to-be-determined parks family of furnishings. If Capital Metro implements improved and more frequent bus service along Guadalupe Street as

KEY GOALS

- Ensure that the current design to "reset" the park is fully funded and executed.
- Create a new focal point around sustainable food concession(s) and dining.
- Promote redevelopment and active uses around the square.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide moveable chairs at Auction Oaks deck. Plant with native and possibly edible vegetation.
2. Create accessible path.
3. Implement Great Streets sidewalks and street trees.
4. Provide bus shelters along Guadalupe Street.
5. Create open lawn for movies, events and temporary art installations.
6. Create grove of deciduous trees that allows views and access into park.
7. Create shady plaza/dining terrace with water feature and possible sustainable food demonstration.
8. Introduce food kiosk with restroom and storage. Pursue farmers market food vendor.
9. Design San Antonio Street plaza to support Farmers Market.
10. Require pedestrian-oriented uses facing park.
11. Consider constructing public restrooms.

Republic Square Improvement Concept

planned, Great Streets improvements should be made in concert with bus shelter construction, at least on the Guadalupe Street edge, and ideally on all street frontages of the park. Special care should be taken to assure that the pedestrian circulation of the park and the public right-of-way does not conflict with that of bus patrons and that the transit area is clearly defined within the public right-of-way rather than spilling into the park. (See possible on-street bus transfer station layout in Wooldridge Square section.)

An affordable food offering and moveable tables and chairs would help attract users throughout the day.

- ***Introduce food-vending within or adjacent to the square:*** The northwest corner of the park at Fifth and San Antonio streets makes an ideal location for a food vending and eating terrace area, easily accessible by Courthouse workers, jurors and visitors, and visible from Fifth Street. Mobile food carts with movable chairs and tables are also recommended. In addition, consideration could be made for a permanent food-vending concession building or kiosk along the edge of the square that could also provide storage for movable furnishings.

- ***Provide public restrooms:*** There are no public restrooms in close proximity to Republic Square. As part of an overall downtown program, it is recommended that restrooms be constructed in public parking garages where they can be more easily overseen and managed, and where they do not consume or impact public open space. At Republic Square, it is recommended that the City work with the State to construct public restrooms in the existing State-owned parking garage on San Antonio Street.

D. Downtown Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks, consisting of Duncan Park and UT's Centennial Park. These parks generally function to provide recreational opportunities for a specific residential neighborhood, and thus are more family-focused, with playgrounds, picnicking, swimming, tennis or basketball, as well as unprogrammed open space areas. Duncan Park's neighborhood is still emerging, with many new apartments and condos nearby, while Centennial Park's "neighborhood" is really the southern part of the UT Campus, particularly the School of Nursing.

Duncan Park

The southern portion of Duncan Park has continuous activity with the BMX park (above), while the northern portion contains mostly unprogrammed open space (below).

Location and History: Duncan Park is approximately 5.7 acres and is comprised of areas north and south of West Ninth Street between West Avenue and Lamar Boulevard. The park is bounded by Shoal Creek to the west, West Tenth Street to the north, and office and residential uses to the east and south. Duncan Park was outside the limits of the 1839 Waller Plan, and an 1887 map of Austin showed the site undeveloped. By 1900, West Tenth Street extended westerly from West Avenue and the surrounding areas to the north and west had been developed with residential dwellings. The City of Austin began acquiring a portion of the park in 1929 and continued acquiring the remaining parcels through 1974. In the 1980s the portion of the park south of West Ninth Street began to be used as a BMX bicycle jumping/trail park. The BMX park was built by the users with minimal involvement by the City of Austin and continues to be used as an active BMX park today.

Ownership and Management: Duncan Park is owned by the City of Austin and maintained by PARD. The BMX users (a community cooperative called the Local Diggers Union) manage and maintain the half of the park located south of West Ninth Street.

Existing Conditions and Constraints: Duncan Park north of West Ninth Street is approximately 3.7 acres and is comprised mostly of unprogrammed open space. A large part of the park contains an open lawn scattered with benches and picnic tables. Most of the lawn is located within the 100-year floodplain. The lawn transitions into a heavily wooded slope to the east and a slope with clusters of trees to the north. The overall grade change on the north and east sides of the park is approximately 12 to 14 feet. The Shoal Creek Hike and Bike Trail runs parallel to the creek, providing a linear but inconsistent stream of activity in the park. The lack of programming in the northern portion and the homeless population

1. Office and residential in historic houses along W. 10th St and West Ave.
2. Parallel parking
3. Steep slope and eroded swale
4. Outdoor patios along Shoal Creek
5. Open lawn
6. Limestone outcrop
7. Riparian vegetation
8. Existing 100 year floodplain
9. Existing hike and bike trail

Duncan Park Existing Conditions

Shoal Creek Saloon opens to the creek, but provides limited views into the park because of existing vegetation.

both contribute to the underutilized condition of the park.

The portion of the park south of West Ninth Street is almost two acres and is entirely located within the 100-year floodplain. This BMX park has significant daily activity and creates a unique attractor, but the heavy use has resulted in erosion, damaged trees and compacted soils. The site has a gentle slope towards the creek and is dotted with hundreds of dirt mounds. Significant stream bank erosion has occurred along the Shoal Creek edge. The unsafe street level connection between the north and south areas of the park results in poor connectivity between the two areas.

Framing Uses and Activities: The surrounding residential and office uses to the north, east and south contribute to the neighborhood character of the park, but the sloped terrain to the north and east create a visual barrier into the park. Shoal Creek and the hike and bike trail provide a positive edge to the west, but the current trail use is erratic and does not create a consistent stream of activity. Commercial uses line the western edge of Shoal Creek between West Ninth and Tenth streets and include Shoal Creek Saloon, Emerald Coffee and a gas station/convenience store. Both Shoal Creek Saloon and Emerald Coffee open to the creek, but the existing vegetation largely obstructs views to Duncan Park. The strongest views into the park are from the Nokonah condominium building along the western banks of Shoal Creek at West Ninth Street. The park is somewhat isolated from the downtown urban fabric due to the steep slope along the eastern edge and Shoal Creek along the western edge. Although the park is less than a block east of Lamar Boulevard, there are very poor visual and pedestrian connections between the two.

Current Activities and Programs: There are very few organized activities that occur in the park and the majority of these are associated with the BMX park and Shoal Creek trail. Daily activity at the BMX park and along the trail is common, but the other areas of the park generally have very low use. The Local Diggers Union organizes activities in the BMX park during Cinco de Mayo, Fourth of July and Halloween.[14] The overall lack of programming has resulted in an underutilized and quiet neighborhood park.

Long Term Vision and Recommendations: In PARD's Long Range Plan, the redevelopment of Duncan Park is ranked as the eighth of the top nine priorities for Planning Area 1. As a neighborhood park, Duncan Park should be programmed to serve the surrounding area and the expected increase in residents; a high priority for the surrounding Original Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA) is bringing residents back to the neighborhood. Given the park's central location along the downtown stretch of Shoal Creek, the park should also provide activities

14 http://www.progressiveparkdesign.com/public/store.html

and a resting place for people using the Shoal Creek trail. Improvements that are made to the park should help serve the users and promote positive activity. Recommendations include:

- ***Install a well-designed children's play area*** near the Shoal Creek trail, with good access to Ninth and Tenth Streets.

- ***Construct a restroom building*** with good visibility and access from Ninth Street and the Children's play area.

- ***Integrate an off-leash dog area*** adjacent to the slope at the eastern edge, near Ninth Street. This location would minimize conflicts with other users, and the adjacent sloped, wooded area would provide a buffer between the off-leash area and the bordering properties. The off-leash area should include a fence with a double gate, an appropriate surface material within the off-leash area, landscape screening around the fence, benches for dog owners and a dog drinking fountain. Separate areas for large and small dogs should also be considered.

- ***Create stronger pedestrian connections*** between the trail, sidewalks, restroom and activities.

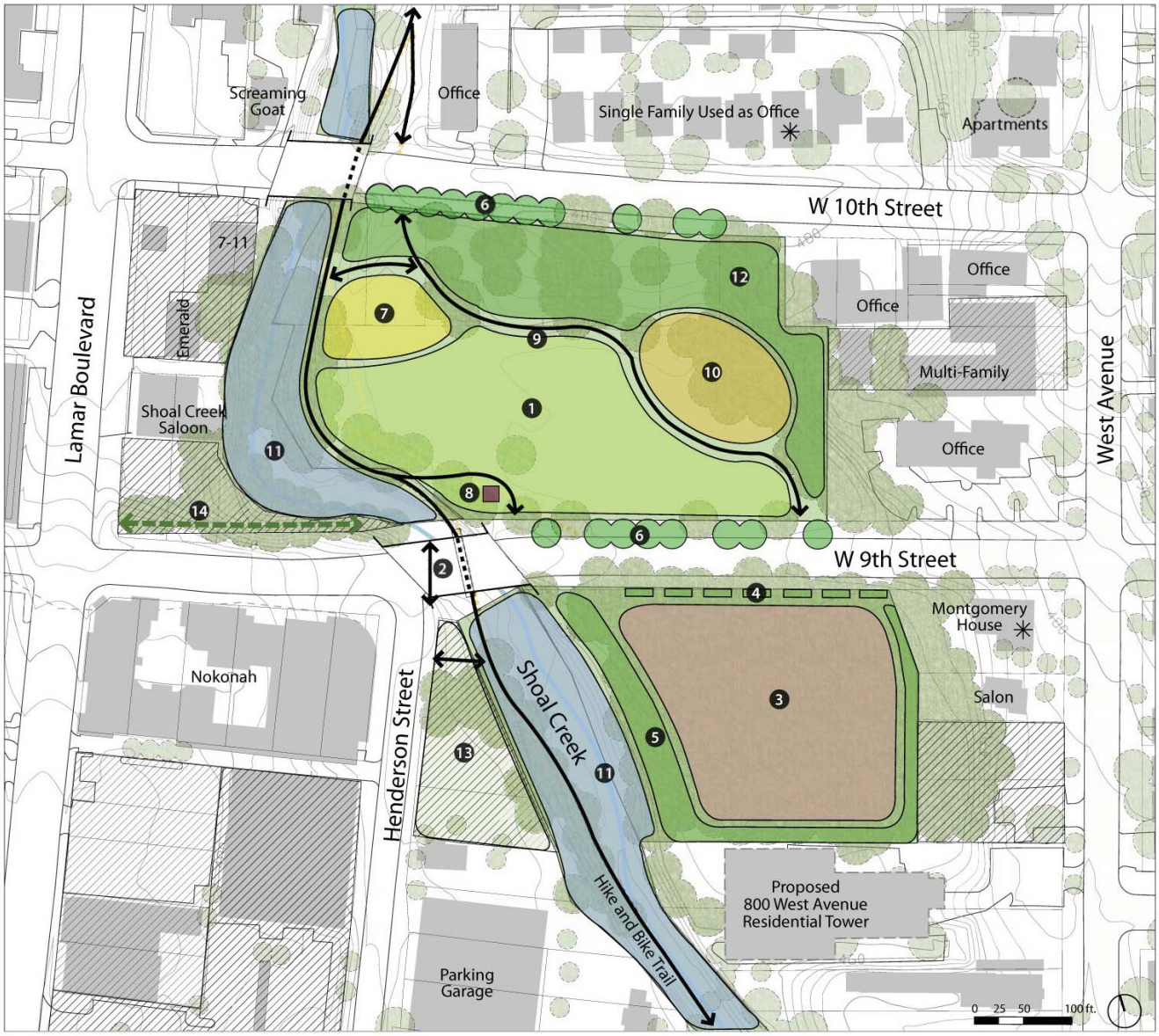
- ***Create a stronger connection between Lamar Boulevard and Duncan Park.*** For example, City-owned land at the northeast corner of Lamar Boulevard and West Ninth Street could be integrated into the park design, providing an opportunity to create a Lamar Boulevard address to the park.

- ***Consider acquiring the tract of land at the southeast corner of Henderson Street and West Ninth Street,*** between Henderson Street and Shoal Creek. The entire tract is located within the 100-year floodplain, and the City of Austin has already installed some trail connections within this area. A stronger connection between the street and trail and a community garden to serve the surrounding residents are possible uses for this land. In addition, a community garden partnership with the Sustainable Food Center and nearby Whole Foods could be pursued, which could help create a better connection between the park and the Market District activities at Fifth/Sixth streets and Lamar Boulevard.

A children's play area would serve the surrounding neighborhood and provide a much needed family-friendly activity in downtown parks.

KEY GOALS

- Improve tree health and vegetation throughout, reinforcing the natural creekside environment.
- Create new attractions to the park to intensify its daily use by nearby residents and employees.
- Contain the BMX park activity so it does not impede use of public ROW.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Preserve open lawn and introduce an irrigation system.
2. Introduce crosswalk on Ninth Street.
3. Maintain and enhance BMX park.
4. Install a low wall or vegetated buffer along sidewalk.
5. Create a vegetated buffer along Shoal Creek and adjacent properties in BMX park.
6. Implement Great Streets sidewalks and street trees.
7. Install children's play area.
8. Construct restroom building.
9. Improve and create accessible paths connecting activities.
10. Integrate off-leash area adjacent to slope.
11. Maintain riparian vegetation, implement slope stabilization and provide benches/picnic tables along the riparian edge.
12. Maintain woodland and vegetated slope.
13. Consider land acquisition for additional parkland.
14. Improve pedestrian connection between park and Lamar Blvd.

Duncan Park Improvement Concept

Near Term Investment Recommendations: Near term improvements in the northern portion of the park should aim to attract users and provide an appealing landscape to visit.

An off-leash area would serve nearby residents.

- ***Introduce an irrigation system*** in the open lawn area. This would provide an opportunity to create an inviting and green park during the hot summer months.

- ***Maintain vegetation along Shoal Creek*** to open views to the creek and the adjacent uses.

- ***Introduce a safe crosswalk on West Ninth Street*** between the northern and southern portions of the park to promote activity between the two areas.

A change of programming for the BMX portion of the park is not recommended, but near term improvements should be made to this area to reduce the environmental impact on the land and creek and improve pedestrian safety and access. The lack of ground cover in the park and heavily compacted soils create increased runoff and erosion at the edge of Shoal Creek.

- ***Create a vegetated buffer along the Shoal Creek edge.***

- ***Implement stream bank stabilization*** along the heavily eroded banks.

- ***Install a low wall or vegetated barrier along the Ninth Street sidewalk*** to contain the activity in the BMX park and keep the sidewalk open for pedestrians.

- ***Ensure a positive pedestrian and bike connection between Duncan Park and the House Park skate park.***

E. Park Furnishings and Signage

Downtown Austin lacks a standard system of parks furnishings and signage. These elements, if well-designed and systematically used, will contribute to the identity and branding of downtown parks and open spaces, bolstering a both a sense and pride of place.

1. Park Furnishings

Park furnishings have the potential to enhance user experiences. Consistent and high-quality furnishings in downtown parks provide comfort for and impart a sense of respect to the user, as well as a sense of familiarity with the place. Near term recommendations should focus on working with PARD to develop a comprehensive set of guidelines for a "family of furnishings" in downtown parks. These guidelines should include standards for high-quality park furnishings (benches, picnic tables, moveable seating and tables, water fountains, waste and recycling bins, light fixtures, railings, bollards, fences, bicycle racks and shelters, bus shelters, etc.), installation standards, criteria for locating furnishings, space and trail illumination, maintenance and operations, and possible exceptions or acceptable variations to the standards. These guidelines should build upon the near term recommendations and standards.

Interim Recommendations and Standards: Until the above set of guidelines can be fully developed, vetted and adopted, the following "interim" standards are offered for consideration to guide small investments that may be needed immediately to replace and/or supplement existing public parks furnishings.

Seating

- A tried-and-true bench recommendation for Austin's downtown parks would be the "Central Park" bench. It is a traditional park bench offering aesthetic and sustainable design, durability, affordability, timelessness and adaptability to different configurations. (The Central Park bench is manufactured by Kenneth Lynch & Sons #3238-P bench type "B" and has been used at Mueller's Lake Park and Southwest Greenway in Austin, where it has been fitted with Ipe (wood) slats on the standard concrete frame.)

- For moveable chairs and tables, the classic "Bryant Park" furniture is recommended, particularly for use in the historic squares. Other types of moveable chairs and tables may be used in other parks, providing a more contemporary and even playful image, as appropriate to the immediate setting.

The Central Park bench is a classic park bench that has a strong park character.

Trash and Recycling Receptacles

- The recommended trash/recycling receptacle for downtown parks is that already in use in Downtown Great Streets Program. Its color could be differentiated from the Great Streets receptacles (which are silver) to reflect a parks-oriented color, such as the classic dark green that signifies "park furnishing". (This trash receptacle is manufactured by Fair Weather Site Furnishings (TR-12, green), and can be tailored to become a recycling receptacle.

Drinking Fountains

- At all drinking fountain locations, at least one bowl shall be accessible per American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

- The recommended drinking fountain is a pedestal type that incorporates an accessible (ADA) bowl. An attached pet fountain should typically be added. This drinking fountain is manufactured by Most Dependable Fountains, Model 440-SS (green).

Bike Racks

- The recommended bicycle rack is the simple, "U"-shaped or loop rack that parks two bicycles. It is already a Great Streets Program standard and preferred by the City of Austin Bicycle Program. It is manufactured by DuMore Site Furnishings, 83 Series. A galvanized finish is preferred for bike racks, rather than a painted or powder-coated finish due to its superior durability.

- The City of Austin Bicycle Program should be consulted about appropriate numbers and locations of racks, but these should be easily visible from public rights-of-way and accessible bike paths, and be located at park entrances, near public gathering spaces, eating areas, trailheads, public restrooms and building entries.

The "Bryant Park" moveable chairs and tables (above) are recommended in the historic squares. The "U" bike racks (below) should be used in all downtown parks and open spaces.

Signage and Way-Finding

The current standard City of Austin park signs are too large in scale, especially for the smaller, downtown parks, however, a more compact version that retains the same leaf graphic could be developed that could also contain information such as park hours and rules. A Downtown-specific family of signs - including both informational and way-finding signage - should be developed for the entirety of Downtown. Good park signage helps establish a positive park identity, provides needed information and direction for park users, communicates a sense of public order and security and facilitates enforcement.

Guidelines should be developed for a downtown=wide way-finding system. These guidelines should outline the planning, specification, graphic design, location and construction of signs throughout the various districts of downtown, including its parks and open spaces. An over-arching "Downtown identity" should be established for the signage program, but districts and parks could each have some unique attributes. For example in the public parks, as mentioned above, the PARD leaf logo could be retained but used in a slightly different way that on City parks signs outside the downtown.

A family of signs would help provide an overall identity for downtown parks, such as this for Lady Bird Lake, designed by RVi.

V. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A. Overview

City parks have become increasingly important to downtown revitalization efforts. World-class spaces help define the city's identity, serve as amenities for residents and workers, and activate Downtown during workdays, evenings and weekends. However, funding and managing the transformation of a downtown park system is both complex and costly. This section of the master plan describes a framework for action – both short and long term – that would translate the vision for Austin's downtown parks into a reality.

The City of Austin must first decide where to begin: an initial signature project will set the standard for quality and design of future park renovations and will generate momentum and buzz that can be leveraged in support of future projects. Successful signature projects, such as Chicago's Millennium Park, are typically centrally located and densely programmed with attractions that draw both local and regional visitors. Austin has several parks with signature potential, including the Waller Creek Corridor with Waterloo Park and Palm Park, as well as the historic squares.

To create and maintain high quality parks, substantial one-time capital funding and ongoing operations and maintenance funding is required. Public sources almost always account for the majority of a park's capital funding. The City, through PARD, should continue to serve as the primary governance and management entity for downtown parks. To increase public funding to PARD, the City has several tools at its disposal, including a General Fund increase, adjustments to the Parkland Dedication Fee, adjustments to event and concession policies, and increased solicitation of corporate and private sponsorships and donations.

Chicago's signature Millennium Park is centrally located and attracts local and regional visitors.

However, because downtown parks require an even higher level of investment and management oversight than the rest of a parks system, they rarely depend on public funding alone. Many municipal parks agencies – including Austin's PARD today – work with special purpose entities to produce

supplemental funding and management capacity. Entities such as development corporations, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and conservancies each have access to financial resources that are not as readily available to municipal parks departments, and which can execute capital projects and manage and program open spaces in ways that complement the resources of government agencies.

Therefore, PARD should seek to partner with one or more special purpose entities for the purpose of executing park revitalizations Downtown, and potentially also for management and/or programming of downtown parks. The nature of this entity – public-private development corporation, private BID organization, or non-profit conservancy or friends group – and the nature of its role and relationship to PARD should be further determined in reference to priority projects and the range of available funding sources. As part of the Downtown Austin Plan, the creation of such an entity is being considered to facilitate the implementation of the phased set of recommendations and improvements, so this entity could be charged with implementing and managing the priority signature park or parks.

In addition, Austin should enhance partnerships with local business organizations and non-profits interested in improving the quality and activation of downtown parks. In some cases bringing these sources to bear depends on shared management arrangements; in other cases, the entities simply support the parks department in managing parks. In addition to enhancements to the public role and capacity, this chapter presents the strengths of partnering with a range of special purpose entities to meet construction, maintenance and/or programming needs for park transformations.

Potential Funding Source

Funding Source	Management Entity	Capital	Operating
General Fund	Public	✓	✓
GO Bond	Public	✓	
Parkland Dedication Fee	Public	✓	
Concessions	Public		✓
Events	Public		✓
Sponsorships	Public	✓	
Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone	Local Government Corporation	✓	
Commercial Property Tax Downtown	Public Improvement District		✓
Philanthropy and Grants	Non-Profits	✓	✓

B. Implementing World Class Parks

Recent transformative park projects have relied on major capital investments, design excellence, and a commitment to a high standard of operations, maintenance and park programming. Successful downtown projects have ranged from large, city-building parks, including Millennium Park in Chicago, Discovery Green in Houston and the High Line in New York City, to those that have renovated and revitalized existing parks serving key downtown neighborhoods, including Bryant Park in New York City, Post Office Square in Boston and Patriots Square Park in Phoenix. Today these parks serve a range of users, whose presence – or extended presence – bring activity, investment and spending to downtown real estate. Millennium Park in Chicago sees millions of visitors a year who subsequently visit other downtown Chicago institutions and retailers, and has helped to fuel a residential development boom Downtown. The High Line in New York has attracted approximately 150,000 visitors per month since it opened in June and catalyzed major real estate investments in New York's West Chelsea neighborhood even before its opening. Other downtown parks bring workers outdoors for lunch and motivate them to stay Downtown during the evening for events and activities.

As organizers and catalysts of downtown revitalization, these projects have contributed to precisely the goals the City of Austin has established for its master plan: they enhance Downtown's livability in ways that are respectful of a city's history and culture, and secure the Downtown's economic and competitive position at the center of the region. By prioritizing parks and open spaces within the Downtown Plan, Austin has acknowledged that the public realm is and will be both an important amenity for businesses and residents, and a highly visible aspect of the city's national identity.

A common element of the transformation process for these downtown parks has been a reliance on alternative funding, execution and management approaches. For a variety of reasons, cities that have successfully transformed their urban parks have found it necessary to modify the conventional model of funding capital improvements through the parks department's capital budget and funding operations and maintenance exclusively through municipal general funds. Successful models have included:

- **Millennium Park** in Chicago, where Millennium Park Inc. raised capital funds for and developed the park's capital assets, and the Chicago Parks Department serves as the operations and maintenance entity, with programming support from Millennium Park, Inc.

Millennium Park has helped to catalyze a residential development boom in downtown Chicago.

- **Discovery Green**, a 12-acre public park created in downtown Houston from 2004 to 2008 through a collaboration between the City, the Houston Downtown Park Corporation and the Discovery Green Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) corporation, with a 50-year contract to develop and manage the park. The site was selected because of its ability to strengthen connections between the Convention Center, Minute Maid Park and the Toyota Center. In addition, the City wanted to create a public space that would serve as a community destination and provide both active and passive recreation opportunities. The Conservancy raised $54 million of the total $125 million development cost of the Discovery Green park and its underground parking garage. The annual operation and maintenance cost is $1.5 million, which is split evenly between the City of Houston and the Conservancy.

- **Post Office Square**, a 1.7-acre plaza and 1,400-space underground parking garage in Boston, Massachusetts, began development in the early 1980's. The real-estate market was booming in downtown Boston and development space was at a premium, but a blighted three-story concrete parking garage stood in the heart of the revitalized financial district. One local developer founded Friends of Post Office Square, a civic organization of businesses located near the site, with the intention of buying the garage and redeveloping and managing it as a park. Friends of Post Office Square consulted with the Parks Department and the Boston Greenspace Alliance to develop the plans. With the strong support of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Friends of Post Office Square secured the development rights from the City of Boston. The garage opened in 1990 and the park in 1992. After the debt has been paid, the City of Boston will receive all profits for use in other parks. The total capital cost of the plaza and garage totaled $90 million ($1 million provided by Friends of Post Office Square, $29 million from preferred stock and a $60 million loan).

- **Fountain Square**, a historic square in the heart of Cincinnati, renovated between 2004 and 2006 by Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) in partnership with the City of Cincinnati. The $49 million renovation

Discovery Green (left) was created through a collaboration between the City, the Houston Downtown Park Corporation and the Discovery Green Conservancy. Post Office Square (right) was developed through a civic organization of businesses.

included $13 million in new markets tax credits, a $15 million mortgage, an $8 million Cincinnati Equity Fund, a $4 million State of Ohio Urban Redevelopment Loan, $4 million from the City of Cincinnati and $5 million from corporate and philanthropic contributions. The annual operations and maintenance costs total $425,000/year.

- **The San Antonio River Museum Reach** is a 7,200 linear foot extension of the downtown Riverwalk that has been planned for many decades and was completed in 2009. The San Antonio River Commission, a group of citizens and community leaders, guided the project, in terms of community outreach, encouraging private land donations to the river corridor, setting design intentions and recommending the highly successful design/build process. The City of San Antonio created a local government corporation (LGC) entity to become a "special project" team whose mission was to bring the project to fruition in just a few years. The project would not have been possible without this focused, entrepreneurial leadership. The LGC team continues to work with adjacent land owners and developers to bring appropriate development to the riverfront. The $72.1 million capital cost was shared between the City of San Antonio ($52.3 million), the County ($13.1 million), private funds ($6.5 million) and the San Antonio Water System ($0.2 million).

- New York City's **High Line**, was developed through capital funding by the New York City Economic Development Corporation which served as the City's project manager and worked closely with the Parks Department and the non-profit, Friends of the High Line, to build the park. The High Line is now operated through a concession agreement between the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and Friends of the High Line. The Parks Department made a funding commitment to match the revenues that Friends of the High Line generates through concession agreements with vendors, event rentals and programming and private philanthropic fundraising for both capital improvements and park programming and operations.

Cincinnati's Fountain Square (left) was renovated by the Cincinnati City Development Corporation in partnership with the City. The San Antonio River Museum Reach (right) was funded by the City, County, private funds and San Antonio Water System.

The High Line was financed by the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

- The City of Boston works with the **Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy** to operate and fund capital improvements for the new band of public parkland on top of the former Central Artery, created in the wake of the Big Dig. In recognition that a potentially substantial amount of private philanthropic funding might be available to fund the park's completion and its operation and maintenance, an independent conservancy was created that could accept donations and use them to maintain the park.

These innovative models, which have been successful in producing transformative parks and ensuring their maintenance to a high standard, have not eliminated, nor do they call into question the role of, municipal parks departments; rather, they have supplemented the departments with additional entities capable of:

- ***Accessing funds from a range of sources not conventionally available to parks departments.*** For instance, private fundraising campaigns have proven most effective when led by a non-profit foundation or conservancy, which can tie campaigns to specific capital improvements or to programming that is more likely to attract contributions. Other funding sources require specific statutory authorization inconsistent with a parks department mandate, such as collection and use of Business Improvement District funds, or issuance of tax increment financing for improvements within redevelopment areas.

- ***Working at the intersection of real estate development and improvements to public infrastructure.*** Special purpose entities can be tasked with undertaking public improvements to infrastructure, including parks and open spaces, and working to execute public-private real estate development projects that leverage the value of those improvements, often within a priority geographic area.

- ***Addressing management challenges arising from the unique context of downtown parks.*** Signature downtown parks have unique characteristics and user groups, often requiring specific skills for maintenance, programming and marketing that are not needed to the same extent within a robust neighborhood parks system across a city like Austin. Supplementary entities can bring these skills to bear in an efficient and focused manner, without being duplicative.

These innovations in American public policy and governance are increasingly being adopted in cities across the country, a trend likely to continue as municipal governments seek to leverage stimulus and other infrastructure reinvestment funds to catalyze downtown redevelopment. What follows is a set of recommendations

that would form the basis of such a system in service of the Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan.

C. Priority Parks Projects

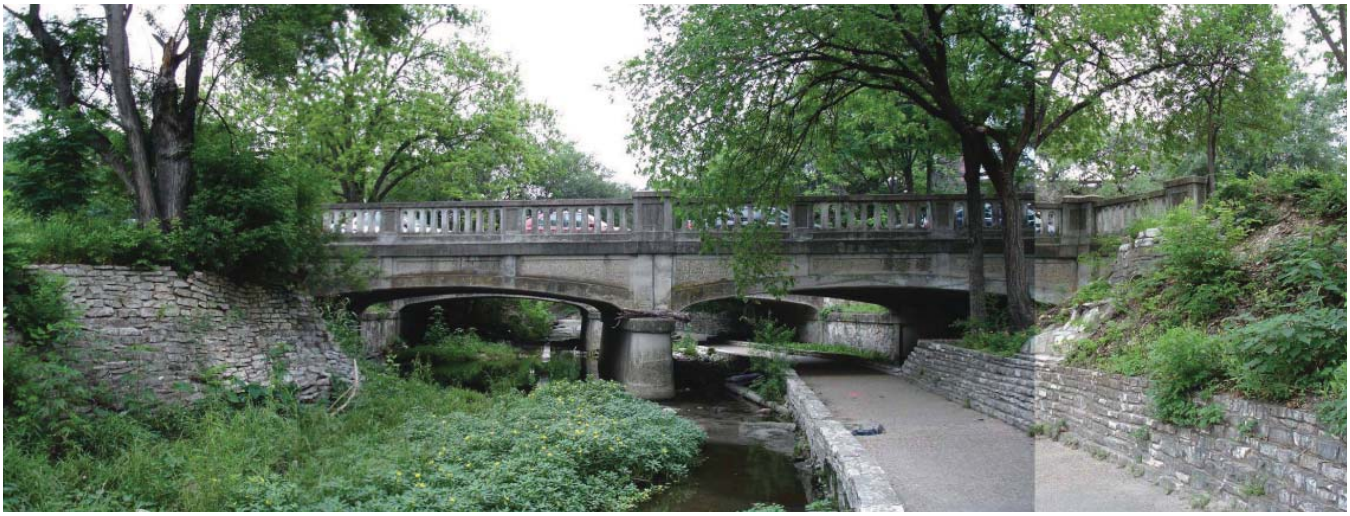
Transforming parks takes time; Austin should focus on a few key efforts first. Initial projects will set the standard for quality, generate momentum, and establish a design and construction process which can all be leveraged in support of future projects.

- **The following projects should be given the highest priority, since they have the greatest potential to transform the urban environment, catalyze private investment, and galvanize public interest and support:**

  Waller Creek Corridor Improvements: The proposed surface improvements for Waller Creek call for the restoration of the riparian corridor and the creation of a linear greenway linking UT with Lady Bird Lake. More than any other proposed project, this has the potential to transform and reposition the eastern half of Downtown by creating an attractive new amenity and destination, and a positive environment in which to develop new uses and activities. It is recommended that highest priority be given to the implementation of the first phase of these improvements in conjunction with the completion of the Tunnel project in 2014.

  Palm Park Restoration: Palm Park is an historically important gathering place and community amenity, but has been separated from its base of users by the interstate highway. The surrounding neighborhood has maintained a strong interest in reconnecting to, reclaiming and revitalizing this space. Prioritizing this park would set the tone and build momentum for future work and provide the focal point for surrounding redevelopment. It could also be used as an event space for convention center events, thus

The Waller Creek corridor improvements should be given high priority.



generating additional activity and income. It is recommended that Palm Park be improved as an integral part of the Waller Creek Improvement project.

Waterloo Park: Waterloo Park is also in need of a surface grade makeover, and is the appropriate size and location to be transformed into a signature, festival style downtown park. Although some improvements will be implemented as part of the Tunnel Mitigation Project, a more comprehensive master plan and design process should be undertaken to ensure that the full potential of the open space is not precluded.

Wooldridge and Brush Squares: The downtown squares are unique in that they primarily serve the downtown businesses and workers, as well as a growing live-work population. Republic Square is already undergoing a first phase improvement project, but Wooldridge and Brush are in need of reinvestment to serve as versatile amenities for a Downtown that is active 18 hours a day, seven days a week. Priority should be given to the enhancement of these two squares. At Brush Square, recommended interim improvements should be pursued pending ultimate relocation of the Fire Department. At Wooldridge Square, the recommended program of interim improvements aimed at making it a more usable and accessible space should be given highest priority.

D. Overall Funding Needs

To create and maintain high quality parks, it is anticipated that substantial one-time and ongoing funding will be required. The cost of implementing the capital improvements for all of the downtown parks at once could be in the range of $45 to $55 million dollars. Downtown parks also require an increased level of operation and maintenance due to their density of design and frequency of use, and enhanced programming due to the Downtown Austin Plan's aspirations for activation. This total funding requirement indicates the need for an increase in overall capital and operations funding sources, rather than a single, one-time solution.

Base O&M Funding for Downtown Parks. To achieve the Plan goals, the standard level of maintenance and programming should be raised for all downtown parks. This should be affected immediately, before undertaking any major capital investments in signature parks. If the level of care given to Austin's downtown parks and open spaces was enhanced to the level of national leaders in urban park systems, operations and maintenance costs for downtown Austin parks would need to increase from $6,700 per downtown acre to between $10,000 and $20,000 per acre. This would result in a doubling or tripling of base funding for the downtown parks.

O&M Funding Needs for Signature Parks. As part of the DAP Parks and Open Space Master Plan, Austin is considering creating one or more signature parks. Because this park could have a world-class level of design, be very densely and actively programmed and host a high volume of visitors, Austin can expect that the operations and maintenance costs of the park will be significantly higher than O&M spending per acre at other downtown parks. Operating budgets for signature parks range widely, but are consistently well above the city-wide average.

Park	Acres	Annual O&M	O&M/Acre
Discovery Green, Houston	12	$ 1,485,000	$124,000
Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston	27	$ 4,500,000	$167,000
Brooklyn Bridge Park, NYC	85	$ 16,100,000	$189,000
The Forks, Winnipeg	56	$ 11,139,000	$199,000
Millennium Park, Chicago	25	$ 8,381,000	$342,000
Bryant Park, NYC	8	$ 3,671,000	$459,000

Typically, the annual O&M cost for highly-amenitized, downtown urban parks ranges from seven to 10 percent of its capital cost, and this level provides a good target budget with which Austin can begin its planning for potential signature parks. Below are projected O&M budget ranges for potential signature parks:

Park	Capital Cost	Acres	Annual O&M		O&M/Acre	
			Low	High	Low	High
Waller Creek	$ 30,000,000	5.3	$ 2,100,000	$ 3,000,000	$ 396,000	$ 566,000
Palm	$ 6,000,000	2.4	$ 420,000	$ 600,000	$ 175,000	$ 250,000
Wooldridge	$ 5,000,000	1.8	$ 350,000	$ 500,000	$ 194,000	$ 278,000
Brush	$ 3,000,000	1.8	$ 210,000	$ 300,000	$ 117,000	$ 167,000
Total	$ 44,000,000	11.3	$ 3,080,000	$ 4,400,000	$ 221,000	$ 315,000

**Note totals include base O&M funding*

E. Strategies For Enhancing Public Funding

While additional sources of funds should always be pursued in order to achieve maximum leverage, local public revenues remain the essential component of a strong parks system. Cities such as Minneapolis, Seattle and Chicago have exemplary park systems resulting from decades of sustained public commitment to their parks departments.

In the short term, the City of Austin will derive the bulk of new public funding for both capital investment and O&M from publicly-controlled sources, including base funding from the general fund, bond funding and parkland dedication fees derived from new development. It can be assumed that the more innovative earned sources, such as concession and event revenues and corporate and private sponsorships, become more substantial funding streams after progress is made on some signature parks and when these become known as great places, with high-quality design and amenities.

For example, the **Chicago Park District** uses an innovative combination of municipal General Obligation bonds, lease revenues from parking garages, TIF financing and philanthropy for its capital projects. On the operating side, the District receives 75% of its operating budget through property taxes; the remainder is funded by a combination of fees from privatized uses, earned income, and philanthropy.
To facilitate the growth and capture of new funding, PARD should be enabled and encouraged to pursue longer and more robust concession agreements, as well as philanthropic and corporate and private sponsorships, including in exchange for naming rights of park assets. The City should also enable PARD to keep all concession and sponsorship revenue within the downtown parks system to demonstrate the direct impact of these sources.

General Fund: A general fund increase for downtown parks is a necessary component to achieve the scale of transformation to which Austin aspires. PARD has expertise in operating and maintaining parks, but lacks the higher level of resources needed for Downtown, given the system-wide needs. An increase in funding for downtown parks would provide a substantial return on investment through increased property values, as high-quality open spaces support a growing residential, worker and visitor population. A public funding increase is particularly important at the outset because initial investments will increase the potential for future earned and philanthropic income.

If a General Fund increase is not sufficient or feasible, increased public funding for capital investments could be obtained through a General Obligation bond issuance in support of the Downtown Austin Plan infrastructure improvements. In the coming months, the DAP will speak to an overall strategy, within which, priority parks and open space investment will be addressed.

Enhanced operation and maintenance funding should also be itemized through a special assessment or built into local property taxes. Minneapolis dedicates 17.5% of property taxes to its Parks Board, an independently elected, semi-autonomous body responsible for maintaining and developing the Minneapolis Park system. In 2000, Seattle implemented a special "levy lid lift" for parks projects, including Olympic Sculpture Park, which was built over a transportation way. Over its first eight-year term, the Pro Parks Levy generated $198 million for parks acquisition, development, maintenance and programming, through an average additional cost to property owners of $0.35 per $1000 assessed value annually. The Levy was recently renewed under similar terms.

Austin should provide additional funds to PARD for both master plan capital investments and annual operations & maintenance funding for downtown parks. Funding for capital improvements for the downtown parks through a bond issuance in support of the Downtown Austin Plan is likely to be required. A special assessment for parks should also be considered.

Parkland Dedication Fee: The Parkland Dedication Fee, which generated $2.6 million in 2008, applies to multifamily properties only. Developers must dedicate five acres of parkland per 1,000 new residents, or pay $650 per new residential unit, and the funds must be spent on capital projects within two miles of the project. Austin's Downtown falls within Zone 5, which will receive approximately $16,000 for 24 new units in 2009, reflecting the overall market slowdown.

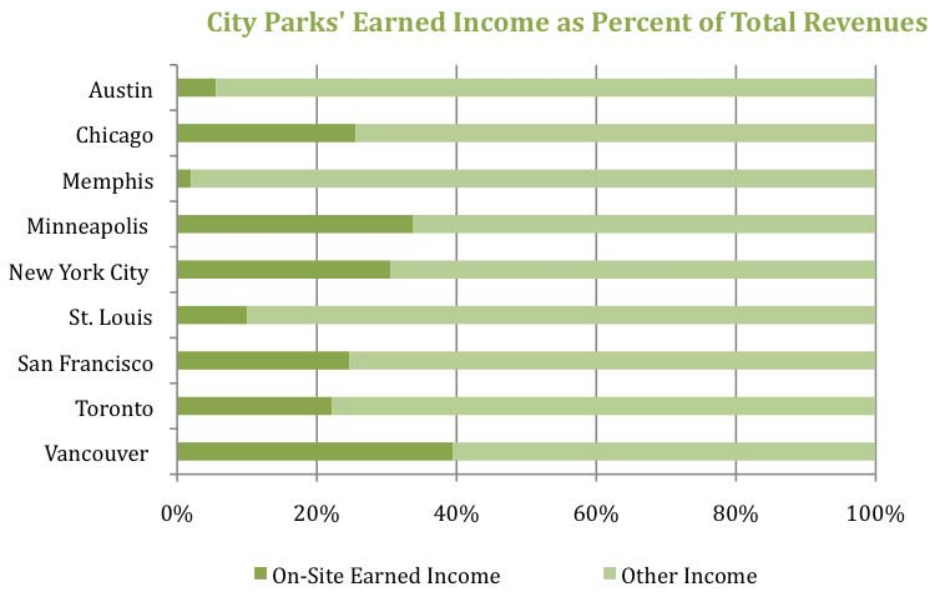
Until two years ago, the fee only applied to developments that required subdivisions of land, such as typical suburban developments - multifamily buildings on single lots were not included. The City estimates that during the last seven year development cycle, about nine million square feet of new development was produced Downtown. Of this new space, about 70 percent was multifamily residential . Assuming standard unit sizes of approximately 1,000 square feet per unit, if the fee had applied to multifamily buildings at the time, it would have generated about four million dollars in parkland dedication fees, sufficient for a modest capital budget. If commercial uses had also been included,[15] they would have generated an additional 1.8 million dollars.

- ***Because downtown parks are an important amenity and driver of value for office and commercial users, the Parkland Dedication Fee should be expanded to include commercial property uses in Zone 5.***

Concessions: When carefully executed, commercial uses can enhance and activate public spaces. On-site uses that pay rent or fees, including recreational opportunities, mobile vendors and cafes, as well as hotels and meeting facilities, provide important amenities to park users and increase activity year round. Austin's parks currently generate three million dollars in on-site earned income, representing about six percent of PARD's annual budget. The most successful park systems in

15 Assuming and holding constant a $650 per 1,000 square foot fee.

comparable cities earn as much as one-third of their budget from concessions, demonstrating a substantial opportunity for Austin system-wide and particularly Downtown. However, all concession revenue from Austin's parks is currently channeled directly into the General Fund, thus eliminating the incentive for PARD to invest time and money in increasing concession revenues.



Assuming that revenues can be retained within PARD, the department should start with a small, high-profile commercial use in a signature park in order to test the market potential and develop management competency. One potential site for a permanent structure is in the north end of Waterloo Park, where the pathway inside the vacated Fourteenth Street ROW cuts this portion of the park away from the main parkland area. Commercial uses along this edge of the park, such as shops and a cafe would generate income and help to activate this park, as well as provide for lunch, happy hour and dinnertime opportunities, especially for the many nearby Brackenridge employees and visitors, State employees and UT students.

In addition, mobile food carts present an excellent opportunity to provide concession amenities almost immediately and at no cost to the City. Street cart food has already become a popular subculture in Austin, and anecdotal evidence suggests unmet demand for workday meals. Austin street cart vendors currently pay 400 dollars per year for permits. While this is likely not a significant source of income, concession amenities can generate activity, and Austin's squares could be positioned as mealtime destinations for downtown workers.

- ***Revenues generated within parks should be retained for use within the downtown parks,*** including permits for vendors, ground leases from permanent structures, as well as event revenues. Changing this policy would require PARD to work with the City's Budget Office to develop a new agreement and present it to City Council for approval.

- ***The City should allow long-term concession agreements with vendors*** in order to enable them to make larger capital investments in their physical facilities. Typical long-term park concession agreements utilize 20 to 30 year terms.

- ***The City should work with the Parks Department and other affected City departments to create new vending "pads" within parks,*** and in parking lanes adjacent to the downtown squares. Permit revenues from new pads should be dedicated to the parks themselves. If the concept is successful, increasing the permit fee for park locations should be considered in the long-term.

Concession amenities can generate activity and revenue in the downtown parks.

Events: Most events in downtown Austin are free, such as the movies and yoga in Republic Square. Entry fees for large events, such as concerts, include one dollar for the host park. Austin's largest event, Austin City Limits (ACL), has a unique relationship with the City. The event brings 75,000 people to Zilker Park for three days and generates three million dollars in gross revenues. C3, the management company, pays:

- $25,000 for the rental of Zilker Park to the General Fund
- $30,000 in damage/replacement costs to the General Fund
- $60,000 for turf specialist position to PARD
- In addition, C3 donates 8.5 per cent of ticket sales (~$250,000) to the Austin Parks Foundation for park grants and projects

Large events are not the only way to generate revenue and activity. Festivals that bring together the local community can become hugely successful affairs. In addition to the "Fridays at 5" style programming common in many downtowns, some cities have developed annual events that contribute to a strong local brand. For example, the Boston CyberArts Festival, Memphis in May (barbecue and blues festival), the Syracuse International Film Festival, Brooklyn's Atlantic Antic and Charleston's Spoleto all draw thousands of local and regional visitors and generate millions of dollars in economic activity each year.

- ***PARD should pursue increased revenues by facilitating more events and charging higher fees.*** While this may include additional department-run activities, PARD can maximize the returns on its monetary and administrative costs by encouraging other entities to organize events and charging either a flat or per-ticket fee for park use and event cleanup. The fees should be structured on a sliding scale that acknowledges the non-profit basis of certain events.

Corporate and Private Sponsorships: As public amenities with a large and diverse visitor base, downtown parks can often capture considerable income from corporate sponsorships. Sponsorships in exchange for naming rights for park assets are an effective vehicle and can be attached to items ranging from fountains and gardens to amphitheaters and subway stations. Sponsors use naming rights for advertising and public relations purposes; the value of naming rights is based on the projected number of "views" by visitors. This can be seen in Millennium Park's Lurie Gardens, Icahn Stadium on Randall's Island, and the Long Center for the Performing Arts in Austin. In all of these cases a public project received sponsorship through a family donation. By contrast, the Dell Diamond Stadium in Round Rock successfully obtained support from private businesses. Toronto's waterfront parks have been particularly ambitious in this type of fundraising, and Waterfront Toronto projects $300,000 per year in naming rights revenues for its 150 acres of new parks.

Austin's existing Facility Naming Policy enables the Department of Public Works to approve dedicatory names for facilities that serve the public, and for special features within those facilities. Parks are specifically identified within the policy as good candidates for naming.

- ***The City should seek sponsorships for signature items in its revitalized parks,*** such as fountains, event lawns and gardens. The City's Facility Naming Policy is silent on the City's ability to charge for naming rights; therefore PARD should develop its own rubric of opportunities and fees. PARD's applications to Public Works should then indicate how the proceeds will be used for the capital or maintenance costs of the item being named.

Because capital campaigns are extremely time-intensive, they are an ideal area for collaboration with a non-profit partner, as discussed below.

F. Roles for Special Purpose Entities

Downtown parks often require a higher level of maintenance and programming due to intensity of use and the increase of amenities (water features, hardscape, buildings, etc.) requiring more care. This section provides an overview of common special purpose entities and describes the new funding sources each entity could feasibly bring to bear in Austin.

Austin should encourage the growth of a network of public-private and non-profit park-supporting entities, whose role would be to support and "top up" the efforts of PARD. A local government corporation is under consideration as part of the overall Downtown Austin Plan, and could be tasked with supporting park development. PIDs are particularly effective at obtaining sponsorships, engaging local business and residents and programming events and activities. A non-profit would also be a means to raise substantial support from communities or constituencies surrounding key downtown park networks, including the Waller Creek District and/or Palm Park, in the form of in-kind services (park volunteers) and philanthropic giving.

Local Government Corporations: Local and State governments have the power to create dedicated agencies, with varying levels of authority, to lead special projects. These are particularly applicable where the value of surrounding development is enhanced by the projects, and the government seeks to reserve a portion of incremental public revenue generated by this value to fund the improvement. Under Texas State law, Austin could create a local government corporation with an associated Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) or a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district , one of whose responsibilities could be complementing PARD's capacity and funding for the development of signature downtown parks. A local government corporation has the ability to channel a variety of public and private funding sources, including bonds issued against tax revenue increments in the TIRZ. A local government corporation would implement the plans of the TIRZ, which could include any number of public infrastructure, open space and other priority projects.

For example, Houston's Uptown Development Authority implements and manages the plans of the Uptown Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) and can channel the funds available through the TIRZ. The TIRZ and Development Authority can issue bond financing against future tax increments to support private projects and project manage associated public infrastructure projects on behalf of the City. These entities are currently implementing 235 million dollars in transit infrastructure improvements within the District.

However, while TIRZ or TIF funding is under consideration as a mechanism for other redevelopment activities Downtown, it may not be a feasible source of capital funds for priority park projects in the short term. There is currently a TIF for the flood control project-related improvements along Waller Creek, including some parks mitigation around the inlet and outlet structures. The TIF district will capture increased property values in the surrounding area. Because of this, additional sources of capital funding would likely be needed for the Waller Creek Greenway and Waterloo Park.

- ***A Special Purpose Development Corporation, structured as a local government corporation, should be pursued to finance and assist in the development of signature downtown parks.*** While TIRZ financing may not be adequate for parks in the short term, a Development Corporation could still draw upon other capital funding sources associated with downtown

development, including fees from the Downtown Density Bonus Program and funds from other government entities. If tax increment financing is sought as a funding source, the Development Corporation should be associated with a new TIRZ.

Public Improvement Districts (PIDs): Austin has two PIDs, the East 6th Street PID and the Downtown Austin PID. The Downtown PID funds the DAA, which was created in 1993 and funds economic development and marketing activities, park maintenance, and clean and safe programs in Downtown. In 2009, the DAA contributed 20,000 dollars towards the Auction Oaks restoration project, and 25,000 dollars to the Austin Parks Foundation, which provides programming and advocacy. The current PID assessment is $0.10 /$100 AV, resulting in a two million dollar annual budget.

In order to maximize revenues from all possible sources, many comparable cities have instituted graduated rates based on degree of benefit, as calculated in terms of a building's proximity to the downtown core, or its use, size, or street frontage. In graduated systems, rates range from nominal fees for parking lots and residential uses in many cities, to as high as $0.47 for commercial uses in the center of Waikiki.

- ***The DAA should consider increasing the PID rate and/or instituting a graduated system*** that covers more property uses. A $0.01 increase in the current assessment would generate $200,000 per year. While the PID was reapproved by the City Council in 2007 for another five-year period, it would actually require approval of a majority of business owners to increase the fee. If passed, the incremental funding should be set aside for the park fundraising and programming activities.

Non-profits: Philanthropic organizations such as conservancies and friends groups can raise substantial support from private communities in the form of philanthropic giving and in-kind services (park volunteers). Fundraising campaigns, led by local non-profits in partnership with parks, are often used to obtain additional funds for signature projects. These campaigns typically include two components. The community component solicits small donations from park users through events or memberships, while the stakeholder component reaches out to prominent local businesses, institutions and foundations for large sponsorships.

Successful capital campaigns depend upon a few strong champions from different sectors who provide leadership and visibility from the beginning, as well as significant staff support to manage outreach and plan fundraising events. Constituency-building is very time intensive. The most successful conservancies, such as the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, Friends of the High Line and Millennium Park Inc., use 15 to 25 per cent of the funds raised for further development efforts.

Parks organizations are generally more successful at raising funds for high profile capital projects and programming than for routine operations. However, some conservancies such as the Rose Kennedy Greenway and Millennium Park's Lurie Gardens, have successfully raised funds for both capital and operating needs though "legacy" contributions, in which a capital gift is coupled with a contribution dedicated to the ongoing maintenance of the capital item.

- ***The City should work with the Austin Parks Foundation, the Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association, and other local non-profits, to expand their fundraising capacity and develop a capital campaign for the first downtown park to be redeveloped.***

- ***All capital campaigns should be structured such that a portion of each philanthropic contribution is earmarked for an operating endowment.***

- ***PARD should also draw upon the DAA's and local foundations' expertise to help identify opportunities for naming rights*** in downtown parks, set appropriate target prices and reach out to individual potential donors.

G. Conclusion: Downtown Parks Implementation Structure

Given the exploration of the strengths and potential applications of a range of public, special purpose, and private/non-profit entities, the primary recommendations for execution of the Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan are that:

- ***Austin should select priority projects to galvanize public interest and support and create a "record of success,"*** The City has several parks with signature potential, including the Waller Creek Corridor, Waterloo Park, Palm Park and the improvement of Brush and Wooldridge Squares.

- ***The City, through the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD), should continue to control the governance, and serve as the primary management entity for downtown parks.*** PARD should draw upon increased funding from the General Fund and Parkland Dedication Fees in the short term and seek increased concession, event and sponsorship revenues in the long term. PARD should also play a leadership role in structuring the proposed changes to the Parkland Dedication Fee and concession, event and sponsorship policies. Lastly, PARD should establish clear rules to ensure parks remain public, even when another entity is providing supplemental programming or maintenance. This can be achieved through limiting hours of operation, types of events, etc.

- ***Options for leading park revitalizations as part of the Downtown Plan include a lead role by PARD or creation of a special purpose entity.*** While PARD should play a lead role for some park capital improvements, investments in signature parks could rely on a special purpose entity. As discussed, a special purpose entity (whether public or private) would be an ideal vehicle for leading capital projects that require both dedicated public capital sources, such as TIRZ Financing or GO Bond funding, and private sources of capital, as well as dedicated staff with expertise in design, fundraising, and/or finance. The type of entity should be determined by its likely mission and funding sources – it could be a development corporation, private PID entity such as the DAA, or a conservancy such as the Austin Parks Foundation or a new non-profit entity.

- ***Austin should enhance partnerships with local business organizations and non-profits interested in improving the quality and activation of downtown parks.*** They are important sources of support for programming activities, excellent partners in fundraising activities, and they can use special purpose funds such as the downtown Public Improvement District charge.

- ***The entity that manages a revenue-generating use should be able to retain the revenues for maintenance and programming uses.*** This means, at a minimum, that PARD should retain all concession, event and sponsorship revenues generated in parks, and that funds generated Downtown should be reinvested Downtown. This concept can also be applied at the park level; signature parks with more substantial capital needs and revenue potential should be able to retain revenues for use within the park, even if it is being managed by a special-purpose entity.

APPENDIX A

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN
Inventory of Downtown Parks and Open Spaces
Revised 1.12.10
DRAFT

KEY #	PARK NAME	PROPOSED TYPE IN DAP	OWNER[4]	OPERATOR/ MANAGER	DATE DEDICATED/ CREATED/ ACQUIRED	APPROXIMATE ACREAGE	FACILITIES	PROGRAMMER/PROGRAMMING	AVERAGE ANNUAL O & M COSTS	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS/ PLANS	STATUS OF IMPROVEMENTS/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY/ COST	CONSTITUENTS	NOTES
1	Town Lake Metropolitan Park / Trail at Lady Bird Lake (Shoal Beach & Waller Beach) (Excluding Sand Beach Park)	Greenway	PARD	PARD	1970s (?)	~13.03 ac[1 2] (Shoal Beach) + ~27.9 ac[2] (Waller Beach) = Total of ~40.9 ac	Playground, Picnic Tables & Pavilion, Water Fountains, Restrooms, Outdoor Showers, Runners Stretching Area, Boat Ramp, Fishing Pier, Hike & Bike Trail, Parking Areas, Pfluger Circle	The Trail Foundation: fun/fundraising races and walks, eg, Capitol 10K, etc.		The Trail Foundation's Vision Plan Priority 1: Implement Enhancement Plan for Trail at Lady Bird Lake; Priority 6: Implement MACC phases II & III, Enhance Pfluger Circle with seating and landscaping.	Approximately $2.2 million dedicated to mitigation improvements from Waller Creek Tunnel Project funding. New Funds, Existing Funds, Parkland Dedication funds, Volunteers/Non-profits and Private Funding from The Trail Foundation. Pfluger Circle ($40-60,000 cost).	The Trail Foundation	PARD Long Range Plan: Implement improvements and enhancements to the Lady Bird Lake corridor. Privately-installed playground equipment @ Waller Beach, near Milago Condos. Runtex provides water stations along trail.
2	Shoal Creek Greenbelt	Greenway	PARD	PARD	1970s(?)	~9.3 ac [1] (Downtown)	2 Picnic Tables, Picnic Pavilion, Hike & Bike Trail	Austin Parks Foundation has held over 50 volunteer workdays since Sept 2005 from Town Lake to 34th St.	Hike and Bike: Daily Service $3,160; Demand $6,294; Greenbelt: Demand $17,642; Mowing $58,188	Priority 2: Corridor improvements and trail extension to Northwest Recreation Center	New Funds, Existing Funds, Volunteers/Non-profits		PARD Long Range Plan: Acquire land or recreation easements for Shoal Creek Trail at 5th Street. 154 trees with irrigation planted in Pease - 2008/09, demo restoration plots in stalled 2007, tons of mulch spread, thousands of invasive trees and plants removed 2005-09. The trail extension to NW Rec Center is a
3	Waller Creek Greenbelt	Greenway	PARD and private ownership	PARD	1977-1982	~5.3 ac [1]	Hike & Bike Trail		Daily Service $15,988; Demand $17,099				PARD Long Range Plan: Restore and revitalize Waller Creek Trail and Corridor with pocket parks and open spaces.
4	Old Bakery	Garden	PARD	PARD	1964?	~0.3 ac [1]	Gift Shop, Hospitality Desk, Historic Building/Site		Daily Service $4,406; Demand $44,113 (includes building maintenance); Mowing $2,827				
5	Wooldridge Square	Historic Square	State of Texas	PARD	1909 dedication plaque, 1940 per COA website (?)	~1.8 ac[2]	Sloping Lawn, Historic Bandstand (1910), 7 Picnic Tables, Historic Site	Reservable for events (15 in 2008), Giant Chess	Daily Service $3,161; Mowing $1,423; Demand $3,959			Friends of Wooldridge Square, Travis County	PARD Long Range Plan: Revitalize historic square.
6	Republic Square	Historic Square	State of Texas	PARD	1839	~1.8 ac[2]	Fountain, Historic Auction Oaks, Historic Site	Reservable for events (11 in 2008), Saturday Farmers Market year round, Austin Parks Foundation-sponsored (APF) movies in the park	Daily Service $4,279; Mowing $4,467; Demand $1,248	Improvement Plans by TBG, Phase 2 pending - summer 2009 - southern berm removal and deck/stage installation - $230K budget from APF	Currently underway, New Funds, Parkland Dedication funds. Budget in 2007: $501,215. Phase 1 - completed - $230K in improvement funded by APF - Auction Oaks, berm removal, stone bollards enclosure installed, 8 new trees planted, 2 trees transplanted.	Friends of Republic Square	PARD Long Range Plan: Revitalize historic square.
7	Brush Square	Historic Square	State of Texas	PARD	1968	~1.8 ac [1]	O. Henry House (Museum) moved to site in 1950s(?), Historic Susanna Dickenson House moved to site in 1990s, Fire Station built in 1930s.	3 events (12 event days) in 2008	Daily Service $1,746; Mowing $1,154; Demand $1,341 (Brush) & $836 (O. Henry House)	Benches, trash cans, irrigation mulching installed in 2007-2008, pending parking lot reconfiguration currently in discussion with AFD.	First phase of improvements was under $18K, parking lot possible reconfiguration pending, pending AIPP project for Susanna Dickinson House, future commuter rail stop.	Friends of Brush Square, ACCVB	PARD Long Range Plan: Revitalize historic square.
8	Symphony Square	Plaza	PARD & Serranos Restaurant	PARD	1982	~1.7 ac[2]	Stone Amphitheatre and Stage, Hike & Bike Trail at creek level, Historic Site, 2 small surface parking lots off Red River St.	Theatrical Events, Music, Art (?), Symphony Box Offices & Administrative Offices	Service $6,147; Demand $1,992				Symphony staff noted difficulty in programming events and staffing offices due to derelict character of creek area.
9	Duncan Park	Neighborhood	PARD	PARD & BMX Users(?)	1929-1974	~5.3 ac[2]	5 Picnic Tables, Hike & Bike Trail, BMX Park south of 9th St.	Not a reservation site	Service $9,180; Mowing $9,390; Demand $6,624	Tree work, picnic tables and clean-up funded by APF grant in 2008-2009.	Work completed and done by the Kabele School via an APF grant.		PARD Long Range Plan: Redevelop Duncan Park (south of 9th St.).
10	Waterloo Park	City	PARD	PARD	1978	~10.01 ac [1] (excluding MHMR site)	13 Picnic Tables, Hike & Bike Trail, Playground, Picnic Pavilion, Restrooms, Surface Parking, Commemorative Statuary & Monuments	Reservable for events (15 events in 18 days in 2008)	Daily Service $25,915; Demand $52,373; Mowing $11,718	Mitigation plan for Waller Creek tunnel includes re-grading, irrigation, new restrooms, new trail system, tunnel inlet structure, pond, etc.	Approximately $1.7 million dedicated to mitigation improvements from Waller Creek Tunnel Project funding; Park would close for 2 years during inlet structure construction (2012 - 2014)		

KEY #	PARK NAME	PROPOSED TYPE	OWNER[4]	OPERATOR/ MANAGER	DATE DEDICATED/ CREATED/ ACQUIRED	APPROXIMATE ACREAGE	FACILITIES	PROGRAMMER/PROGRAMMING	AVERAGE ANNUAL O&M COSTS	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS/ PLANS	STATUS OF IMPROVEMENTS TIME/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY/ COST		NOTES
11	Palm Park	City	PARD	PARD	1929	~2.4 ac[2]	1 Picnic Table, Hike & Bike Trail, Swimming Pool, Historic Pavilion/Picnic Shelter with Restrooms, 2 Multi-Purpose fields	Not a reservation site	Daily Service $14,185, Mowing $3,743, Demand $13,401	Proposed site of Springscape, April 2010 (arts venue benefitting Palm Park and APF)	Old tennis Court removed, soil and mulch added - 2008 via APF and Texas Gas donation, split rail fence to block parking on southern side of park installed 2009 -APF ($2K)		PARD Long Range Plan: Master plan and implement Sir Swante Palm Park. Historically, park was extension of Palm School and was used principally by Hispanic community.
12	City Hall Plaza	Plaza	?	?	2004	~0.7 ac [1]	Limestone boulders, stage, canopy of photovoltaic cells, time capsule	Live from the Plaza concerts					
13	House Park Skate Park & Austin Recreation Center	City	City of Austin	PARD	1939	~1.3 ac[4]	Austin Recreation Center and future skate park			BMX and skate park under design funded by CIP (?).	BMX and Skate Park construction to begin May 2009.		Austin Recreation Center Playscape project is not currently funded but would require $200-$250K
14	Regent's Plaza (6th & Colorado)	Plaza	University of Texas System	University of Texas (?)	1971? (Building restored that year)	~0.4 ac [1]	Fountain, tables and chairs (2006 improvements)						
15	Centennial Park	Neighborhood	University of Texas	University of Texas	1983	~2.7 ac [1]	Time capsule, plaques, bermed and flat lawns						
16	Capitol Square	City	State of Texas	State Preservation Board	1888	~22 ac [3]	Monuments, seating, walkways, historic visitor center building, sloping lawns	Texas Book Festival, rallies, public gatherings, speeches					Grounds are inaccessible to the public by auto due to security design for Capitol Square.
17	Hobby Building "Plaza"	Plaza	State of Texas	State of Texas	1990	~0.2 ac [1]	Water feature						
18	Texas Law Center "Plaza"	Plaza	State of Texas	State	?	~0.6 ac [1]	Water feature, structured planting areas, walkways						
19	Texas Historical Commission "Open Space 1"	Plaza	State of Texas	State	?	~0.2 ac [1]	Large trees						
20	Texas Historical Commission "Open Space 2"	Plaza	State of Texas	State	?	~0.07 ac [1]	Large trees						
21	William B. Travis Building "Plaza"	Plaza	State of Texas	State	?	~0.5 ac [1]	Gazebo, tables and seating, large cypress trees, newspapers, food court in adjacent building						
22	Congress Ave. (Between 10th St. and 11th St.)	Garden	State of Texas	State	?	~0.3 ac [1]	Structured planting area, brick walkways						
23	Woodmansee Plaza	Plaza	Travis County	Travis County	?	~0.5 ac [1]	Large trees, seating						
24	Pickle Building "Plaza"	Plaza	USGSA	USGSA	1965	~0.8 ac [1]	Benches	Blue Lapis Light (dance) performances					
25	Sand Beach Park	City	City of Austin	PARD	planned	~4.6 ac [1]	Biofiltration Pond, Lance Armstrong Bikeway, AIPP			Pfluger Bridge Extension, AIPP			
26	IBC "Plaza"	Plaza	Frances Danforth	?	~2000?	~0.09 ac [1]	Seating, Trees, Sculpture						
27	Chase Bank "Plaza"	Plaza	Travis Realty Corporation	?	1974	~0.3 ac [1]	Seating, Trees						
28	301 Congress "Plaza"	Plaza	NOP 301 Congress LP	?	1986	~0.2 ac [1]	Cypress Trees, Loading Zone						
29	100 Congress "Plaza"	Plaza	Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.	CB Richard Ellis	1993	~0.2 ac [1]	Water feature and seating						
30	One Congress "Plaza"	Plaza	TPG-One Congress Plaza LLC	Thomas Properties Group	2007	~1.03 ac [1]	250-foot-long waterfall and terraced lawn with extensive landscaping and seating at basement level						
					TOTAL	117.3							

Notes:

1. None of the City of Austin-operated downtown parks has individual O&M budgets.
2. Daily Service Includes: Retrieving litter, clean out garbage cans, servicing/cleaning restrooms, shelters, grills, replenish hygienic products, check amenities and maintaining playgrounds and structures for safety and repairs
   Mowing Includes: Mowing/trimming of grass/weeds (14-day mowing cycle)
   Demand/Requests Includes: Work orders initiated by internal or external customers for any service, inspections, repairs or products not covered by daily maintenance and mowing schedules
3. New Funds: CIP bond funding
   Existing Funds: previous bond sales, grants, park impact fees
   Parkland Dedication Ordinance: Land is dedicated at a rate of 5 acres per 1000 new residents or a fee is paid based on $640 per living unit.
4. All acreages are approximate. Many discrepancies exist between the sources listed below.

(Sources: [1]City of Austin GIS information, [2]City of Austin website, [3]State Preservation Board, PARD Long Range Plan, Information, documents received from PARD staff, [4]TCAD)

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DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN
Desired Activities and Amenities Per Downtown Park
Prepared by ROMA Austin and the City of Austin
10.14.09

	Food/Eating					Performance		Public Gatherings and events	Passive Visitation	Gardening			Art			Recreation							Youth-Oriented Activities				Private Rental Uses	Other	
	Mobile Food Vendors	Walk-Up Food Service/Café/Kiosk	Sit-Down Restaurant	Picnicking	Farmers Market	Non-Music	Live Music			Community Garden/ Orchard	Ornamental garden	Native Planting Area / Display	Permanent Public Art	Transitory/ Temporary Art Installation	Art Creation	Off-Leash Area	Water Feature, Splash Fountain	Organized Active Sporting/ Recreation	Non-Organized Active Sporting/ Rec.	Organized Non-Active Sporting/ Rec.	Non-Organized Non-Active Sporting/ Rec.	Other (i.e. skate park, etc.)	Playground	Day Camp	Environ-mental Education	Youth Sports		Bike Parking/ Bike Station	Other
Greenways																														
Lady Bird Lake	X	X	X - At intake for Green					X	X	X	X	X		X				X	X		X - Bird Watching at Waller Creek		X		X		X			
Shoal Creek									X			X	X - Along Skateboard Connection Between Duncan and Skate Park						X			X - Connection Between Skate Park and BMX	X - Duncan Park		X			X - Library (Oriented to Creek, LAB), Bike Rental	
Waller Creek			X		X - Sabine Street	X - Symphony Square, Waterloo Park	X - Symphony Square, Waterloo Park	X	X			X - Riparian Corridor	X	X	X		X - Palm Park, 6th-7th St Water Feature to Mitigate Canal-effect		X						X - Creek Restoration, Urban Ecology			X - 4th Street Convention Center Parking, Symphony Plaza	
City-Wide Parks																														
Waterloo Park		X		X - Hospital/State Visitors and Employees		X	X	X	X		X - Healing Garden							X - Frisbee Golf Tournament, Marathons	X	X - Remote-Control Sailboats	X		X - Play Area				X		
Palm Park	X - Coordinate with Convention Center	X - Coordinate with Convention Center				X	X	X				X	X - Visible from IH 35	X			X - Water Play Area, Pool?		X	X - Yoga, Trail Connection to Waller		X - Carousel	X	X	X - Native Plantings, Stormwater Treatment, History	X	X	X - Bike Rentals?	X - Cultural, Historic Recognition / Monument, Shade Structure
Sand Beach						X	X	X	X				X - AIPP, Solar Installation	X					X	X	X								
House Park																														
The Squares																														
Republic Square	X - Temporary (Farmers Market Vendors)	X - Long Term		X	X	X	X	X	X	X - Edible Landscape, Fruit Trees	X - Educational Opportunity (SFC)			X - Temporary Exhibitions (South Side)			X	X	X - Commercial Ventures?								X	X - Bike Rental / Mellow Johnny's	
Brush Square	X - Temporary	X - Kiosks on Bus Lanes, Catering		X		X	X - Acoustic	X	X		X - Tree Protection	X	X - AIPP	X - Museum Programming	X			X - Bike?			X	X - Coffee		X - Historic Dickenson House	X - Similar to Wildflower Center		X	X - Bike Rental	
Wooldridge Square	X - Short-Term at Least		X - Long-Term	X		X	X	X	X			X - Biolfiltration and Rainwater Harvesting	X - Interpretative Elements (History)	X			X - Educational, Rainwater Treatment			X - Giant Chess, Permanent Tables			X - Children's Activity Area (not play equipment)		X - Raingarden, Biolfiltration				
Northeast Square																														
Neighborhood Parks																														
Duncan Park				X					X			X - Especially Along Creek				X - Area Against East Edge / Slope		X	X - BMX, yoga			X - BMX	X						