# Seaholm Waterfront Planning Partners Meeting September 22, 2017

**Meeting Notes**

**Attendees:**

**Planning Partners**

Downtown Austin Alliance – Mandi Thomas Shoal Creek Conservancy – Joanna Wolaver Office of Sustainability – Amanda Rohlich

Economic Growth and Redevelopment - Greg Kiloh American Institute of Architects Austin – Murray Legge

Mayor Pro Tem Tovo, Austin Parks Board – Rick Coffer

Austin Public Library – Blair Parsons

Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association – Chris Riley

American Society of Landscape Architects – Melissa Robledo

Preservation Austin – Kate Singleton (OOO

Six Square - Nefertitti Jackmon

*Invited but unable to attend:*

\*Waller Creek Conservancy – Melissa Ayala \*Bike Austin - Carson Chavana

\*Asian American Resource Center – Calvin Chen Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce - \*Karlie Ramirez \*Tejano Trails – Laurie Rentoria

\*Lower Colorado River Authority – Clint Harp

\*Austin Community Foundation - Mike Nellis

# Project Team

*Austin Parks Foundation*

 *Katie Robillard*

 *Ladye Anne Wofford*

*The Trail Foundation*

 *Heidi Cohn*

 *Beth Carroll*

 *Al Godfrey*

*Studio Gang*

 *Thorsten Joahann*

 *Valentian Mele*

 *Chris Bennett*

 *Gia Biagi*

*GO collaborative/Civic Collaboration, Public Engagement*

 *Diane Miller*

 *Lynn Osgood*

*City of Austin Parks and Recreation*

 *Cara Welch*

 *Kim McKnight*

 *Jennifer Stevenson*

# Project Overview:

# A general presentation about the project to date was given by Gia Biagi of Studio Gang. Gia explained the research that has been done about the environmental, historical, and regulatory issues at play on the site.

# Lynn Osgood from GO collaborative gave a presentation about the feedback received to date through the survey.

# A discussion then followed about the ideas raised in the presentation.

# Comments emerging from discussions held at the Salon:

* There were many design professionals there, and design professional aren’t afraid to talk about their ideas.
* There were a lot of questions raised too. How does Studio Gang not lose the ideas that came before?
* Austin’s great at doing master plans – and for the public that can be overwhelming – what’s the point of this particular process?
* Response from PARD: We’re never going to create something that’s 100% perfect for everyone. The city wants to support the building for lots of different types of programming and create a place where the city can both see itself (historically) and express itself.
* Response from Studio Gang: People have committed a lot of energy to the site over the years. Our job is to see how we can come up with a set of options that lead to an implementable scale.
* One concern at the Salon was that the site would be framed as recreational – that would seem to trivialize it.
* Response from PARD: The choice of “recreation” was perhaps not the best choice – “civic” is more appropriate. Lots of folks lament that we don’t have a lot of civic assets and amenities – Austin grew up fast as a city and our development of civic assets hasn’t kept up pace. But people want it broadly accessible – not a static museum.
* How do we create something that sustains us as an “event town” but still can hold in a serious way for 10 -15 years down the line?
* Some at the Salon asked how can we not be afraid to bring water in? It’s actually the soul of the building – it’s function. As one architect said, it’s a building that actually emerges out of the water.
* But caution should be taken about making it too austere and “design-heavy.” The magic of inclusion of what happened on that boardwalk when it was built was astounding – if design thinking gets away from that – or away from allowing people access, to the experience of the water, it’s not a good idea.

# General Comments:

* Raising awareness on the site – on the topic – is part of what we’re doing now – but right now there’s not a lot of interest out there – there’s a lot else drawing people’s attention.
* What are the next steps? How do we get in front of ourselves as Austinites – and actually move beyond the planning phase?
* It’s important to talk about governance – between now and December that’s what we’ll be doing. What do we want from Austin, and what is acceptable? We want to lay out options and bring in expertise that can help us with that question.
* Comment from Studio Gang: We need to get the principals right for figuring out the partnership issue before we look at specific options.
* One the main issues will be the ask to council.
* It’s important to make itnclear that there’s a vision for an on-going process. Some experimentation and temporary use would be a good idea – not necessarily a “party shack” type of vision – but at the same time “world class” isn’t the right fit either. Add an examination of how people are currently suing the site – how can that be optimized? Are there issues of people being right next to Cesar Chavez etc.
* How can temporary – pop-up type of events - really help us to come into a relationship with the space? It would give it more of an Austin vibe – Ping-Pong tables and music type of thing.
* The Waller Creek Creek Show is a good precedent.
* Over time the use will change – if we’re talking the long term and 100 years – how can we make the building so that it can accept those changes over time?
* If you make it authentic – then it’s “World Class.” But you can’t make it “World Class” first and have it be authentic.
* Even temporary bathroom and kitchen facilities could be brought in and make it functional for 5 years.
* Parking will be an issue to.
* Comment from Studio Gang: At tomorrow’s Open House we’re not doing a PowerPoint presentation. We don’t have anything visual that says let’s get rid of the parking? Parking could also be where food trucks are - or a platform for play – how is it layered in terms of its function? At this point we don’t have anything formal to say about it – we want to hear what folks have to say about it.
* It would be good to engage the local businesses along the lake
* It would be nice too to have a dark space to observe things along the water at night.
* People would like to paddle up, but not necessarily a full-service recreation spot.