South Central Waterfront Initiative

Interim Draft Vision Framework Report | August 2014

City of Austin

Planning and Development Review Department

Urban Design Division

Acknowledgments

Austin City Council 2013-2014

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Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

The Technical Advisory Group provided multi-departmental coordination throughout the planning process to date. Besides the representatives to the TAG, additional staff from these departments helped at various public events in 2014:

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Tyler Zickert

Stakeholder Outreach Committee (SOC):

The Stakeholder Outreach Committee was created by the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board to assist with public outreach to a broad range of stakeholders. The following active SOC members provided invaluable assistance, helping engage over 600 residents in 2014.

Roy Mann, *WPAB*

Cory Walton, *WPAB*

Tyler Zickert, *WPAB*

Jack Burton, *Burton Real Estate, representing Crockett Properties*

Harry Davis, *Vice President of Fulfillment / Group Lead Cox Media Group*

Francis Ferguson, *President | Housing Works*

Jim Johnston, *Facilities Director | Texas School for the Deaf*

Kevin Lewis, *President | Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association*

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Wendy Price-Todd, *Travis Heights resident*

John Rosshirt, *2014 chair of the Smart Growth Committee of the National Association of Realtors*

Donna Taylor, *business owner*

Over the course of the first five months of 2014 the South Central Waterfront Initiative engaged over 600 people in Waterfront Walkabouts, Waterfront Talkabouts, and a five-day Vision + Design Intensive. These engagement events would not have been possible without community partners who assisted with travel, lodging and honorariums for speakers and expert assistance at the Vision + Design Intensive, venue rental and food for public events, printing costs, miscellaneous expenses and logistics associated with public engagement, and other in-kind support.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Spring 2014 Community & Regional Planning Participatory Methods class, Professor Patricia Wilson, PhD

AUSTIN FOUNDATION FOR ARCHITECTURE

AUSTIN BOARD of REALTORS®

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Spring 2014 Urban Design Studio, Instructor/lecturer: Josh Shelton AIA, El Dorado Architects

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF Est. 1856 LEARN. GROW. BELONG.

aia austin
american institute of architects

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Sources of Figures: Photos/Images/Maps

Chapter 1: Orientation

Chapter cover photo and all images, maps and photos for
Figures 1-1 through 1-9: City of Austin.

Chapter 2: A history of the SCW: 1839-1980

Chapter cover photo and all images, maps and photos for Figures 2-1 through 2-16: courtesy of the Austin History Center.

Chapter 3: Waterfront Planning: 1985-2013

Chapter cover image: Waterfront plan ca: 1960's. Taniguchi Architects
Population figures: City of Austin
Traffic congestion rankings: Texas Transportation Institute
3-1: photo. City of Austin.
3-2: Illustrative plan. 2000 ROMA Report, p.40.
3-3: Design sketch. 2012 SDAT Report, p. 47.
3-4: Illustrative plan. 2012 SDAT Report, p. 43.
3-5: Envisioning plan. 2013 UT Urban Futures Lab Report.
3-6: Image of development without plan. 2012 SPP Report, p. 4.
3-7: Example of development with plan. 2012 SPP Report, p. 5.

Chapter 4: Public Engagement

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4-5: Bagby St. in Midtown, Houston. Image courtesy of Design Workshop
4-6: South Waterfront in Portland, OR. Image courtesy Ankrom Moisan
4-7 – 4-9: City of Austin.

Chapter 5: Community Values

Chapter cover photo and all images, maps and photos for
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Chapter 6: Physical Framework

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Chapter 7: Financial Framework

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7-2: Portland, Oregon property owners. City of Portland, OR.
7-3: map. City of Austin.
7-4: Portland, OR urban design framework. Portland Waterfront Charrette.
7-5 through 7-10: from presentation by Abe Farkas.
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7-11 – 7-12: Austin waterfront c. 1950: Austin History Center.
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Chapter 8: City as an Active Partner

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Chapter 8: Next Steps

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Executive Summary

In August of 2013 the Austin City Council passed a resolution to officially initiate a comprehensive small-area planning process for the South Shore Central sub-district and three adjacent western parcels of the Travis Heights sub-district of the Waterfront Overlay Combining District Ordinance. For simplicity and to avoid confusion with a large, new mixed-use development project elsewhere on the lake that is called the South Shore District, this planning area has been named the South Central Waterfront (SCW) and the planning process now underway is known as the South Central Waterfront Initiative.

The purpose of the South Central Waterfront Initiative is to establish a vision and provide recommendations to guide public and private investments over a twenty-year time span and beyond. The primary aim of the resulting comprehensive small-area plan is to provide a framework so that, as the area changes, it will support at least the following high-priority objectives:

- Establish a lively, attractive pedestrian environment.
- Expand open space and create great public spaces.
- Include affordable housing.
- Enhance connections to and along the waterfront.

In adopting the resolution which launched the South Central Waterfront Initiative, the City Council referred to recommendations from the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board (WPAB) which had provided leadership over the previous two years on grant-funded and pro bono studies that focused on the challenges and opportunities in the South Central Waterfront.

The WPAB recommendations and the Council's resolution cited key findings from studies which warned that zoning ordinances alone were not adequate to guide orderly development in a way to achieve long-held community values, dating back to the Town Lake Corridor Study of 1985, including: enhancing public access to the shore, expanding open space, ensuring quality design and maximizing water quality.

More recent studies added to the list of community concerns, such as providing affordable housing opportunities and integrating green infrastructure, and noted that these community interests were not likely to be well realized under the status quo. The urgency to create a comprehensive small-area plan was underscored by an analysis completed in 2013 which quantified that, at least, $1.2 billion dollars of private redevelopment will likely occur in the South Central Waterfront within the next twenty years. In fact, this wave of redevelopment is rapidly underway as evidenced by the construction cranes currently on four properties in the area.

In addition to building upon the work of the previous planning studies that were cited in the resolution, the City Council instructed staff to vigorously engage with the WPAB, area stakeholders and the broad community to help create a positive vision for the future and recommendations on how to get there. The Council also directed that the results of this initial round of community engagement should be reported back to the Council as soon as possible.

Community engagement for the SCW Initiative began in January, 2014. Through a series of public events during the next four months more than 600 citizens shared their views; events including walking workshops, public lectures, survey events, and a five-day program of open studios and workshops.

Based on input from this vigorous community engagement as well as previous planning efforts, staff met with the WPAB on several occasions in May and June, 2014 to review a preliminary Vision Framework. The draft Vision Framework was presented to the City Council's Comprehensive Planning and Advisory Committee on June 30, 2014.

This draft SCW Vision Framework Report is in response to the Council directive to report the results of the initial community engagement. The draft Vision Framework is an early, interim stage in achieving a fully realized SCW Small Area Plan and Implementation Framework Plan and much work lies ahead. Nonetheless, the work that has been accomplished so far and the emerging vision outlined in this report establish a foundation for moving forward.

The draft Vision Framework identifies three key requirements in order to realize community aspirations for the South Central Waterfront:

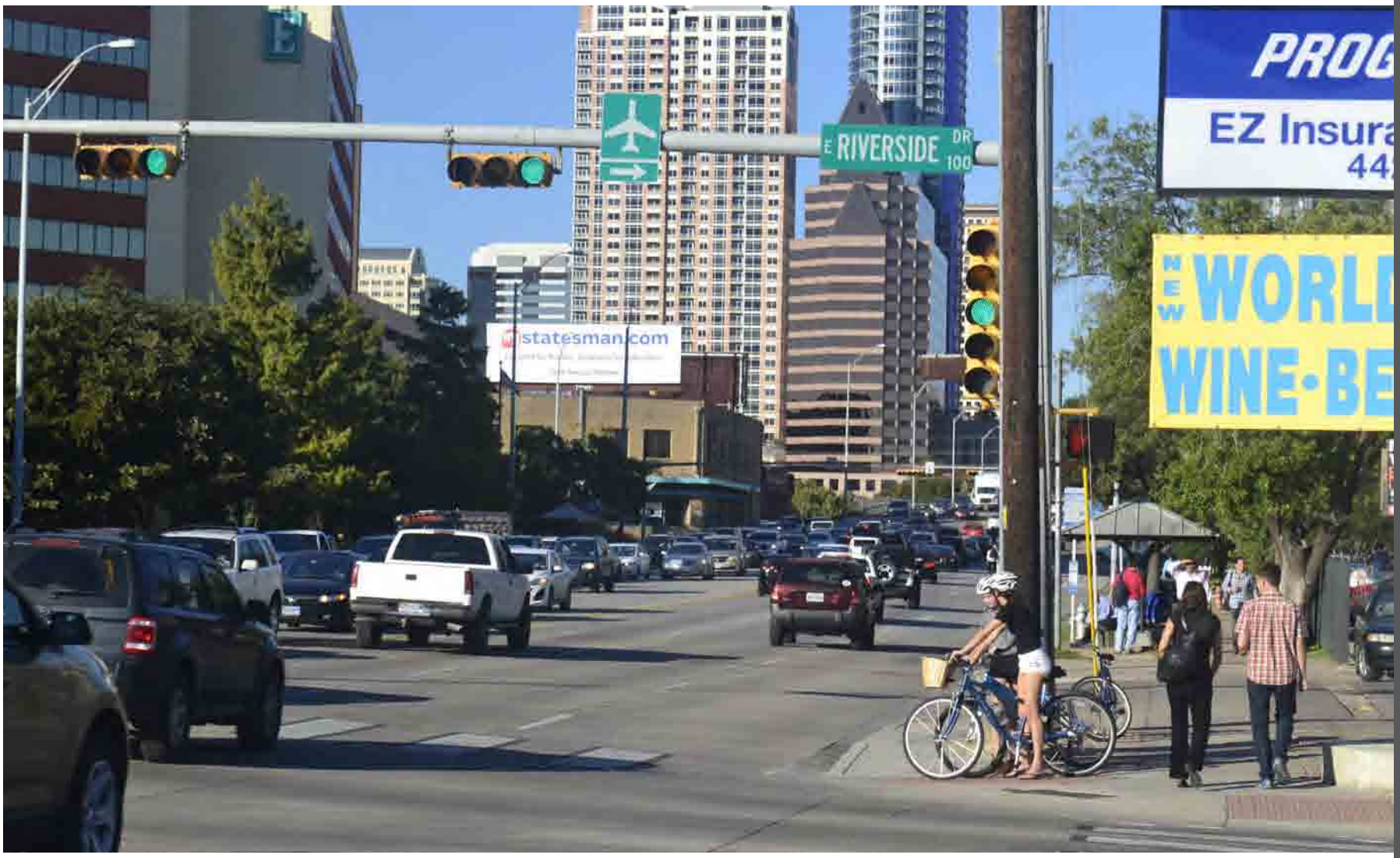
- A Physical Framework for a district-wide vision, not a parcel-by-parcel approach, to provide an integrated network of connecting streets, pedestrian connections, open spaces, and green infrastructure.

- A Financial Framework to capture the district-wide value of investments, both public and private, in order to realize the Physical Framework and to include the creation of affordable housing.

- An Active Partner Framework that will ensure that the City of Austin, by making strategic capital investments, is a proactive stakeholder helping to bring about the public/private partnerships required to achieve the Physical and Financial Framework goals.

Orientation

1

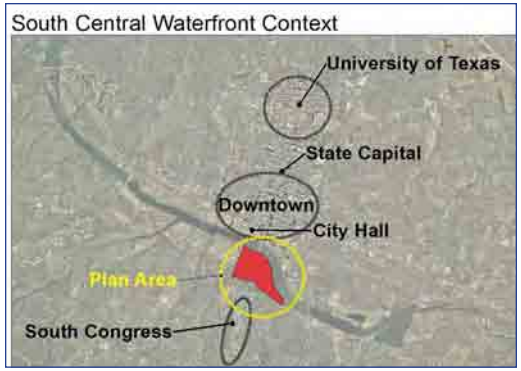


The South Central Waterfront (SCW) is currently beset with many urban design challenges but is on the brink of momentous changes. Under current market trends, at least $1.2 billion of private redevelopment is forecast within the next twenty years. These inevitable changes present an historic opportunity to plan ahead and coordinate public and private investments so that every increment of change contributes to making a great new district.

Orientation

Location

The South Central Waterfront (SCW) is a 97-acre area that runs along the southern shore of Lady Bird Lake directly across from downtown, and is bisected by Congress Avenue, which runs on-axis to the State Capitol one mile to the north. The South Central Waterfront is bounded by South First Street on the west, Blunn Creek to the east, Lady Bird Lake on the north, and East Riverside Drive and East Bouldin Creek on the south (see Figure 1-1). The South Central Waterfront area falls within portions of the Waterfront Overlay Combining District, including the whole of the South Shore Central sub-district (~88 acres) and three adjacent parcels (~9 acres) from the Travis Heights sub-district.



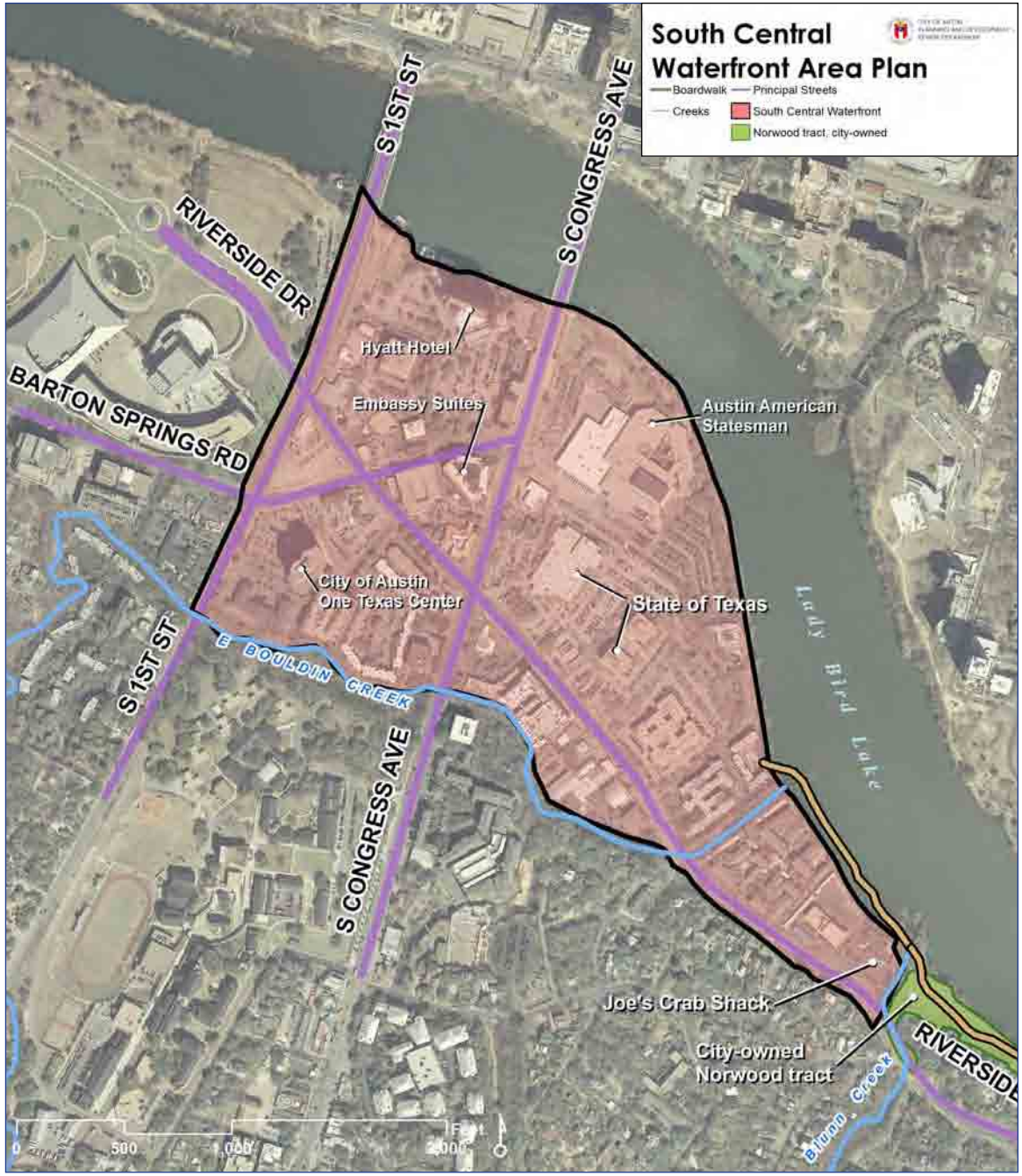


Figure 1-1: The South Central Waterfront Area: A prelude to the downtown and State Capitol across the lake, and a gateway and crossroads to South Austin.

The South Central Waterfront Today: A few key observations

Currently, the South Central Waterfront is largely characterized by the following design problems: inadequate public access and limited public green space along sections of the shoreline; an overabundance of parking lots and aging auto-oriented development; "superblocks" that impede pedestrian access to the waterfront; unfriendly streetscapes; three-quarters of the area is impervious cover; outdated and inadequate infrastructure for addressing water quality; and poor mobility connections.

Figure 1-2:
Bone Structure:
The 97 acres of the South Central Waterfront covers the equivalent of 33 downtown blocks but are only divided into a handful of superblocks. The lack of an orderly street grid hinders an orderly development of buildings within a patchwork of private parcels, and the lack of connectivity makes it difficult to get around the South Central Waterfront, particularly for people who want to walk, bike or take transit. The resulting disorderly positioning of buildings and acres of surface parking lots on these superblocks also limit visual and physical access to the waterfront.

Figure 1-3:
Skin Condition:
71% of the area is covered by impervious surfaces, with half of that dedicated to parking and roadways (50%). These hard surfaces paired with wide fast moving streets make the SCW an unfriendly place for people to walk, bike or take transit, and the surface storm water runoff creates water quality issues for Lady Bird Lake.

Figure 1-4:
Designed For Cars, Not People:
The four transit corridor roads which define the superblocks of the SCW are generally characterized by poor streetscapes with frequent curb cuts, limited tree canopy, few pedestrian amenities, and no visual cohesion.

Primary Use:
Now an Employment Center

Currently, the South Shore Central area, which makes up the bulk of the SCW (88 acres of the study area's 97 acres) is primarily an employment center with 3.8 employees (5,273) to every dwelling unit (1,359), according to estimates from the Sustainable Places Project (SPP) Scenario Planning Report of 2013 (see page 19). This report itemizes the employees by type:

- Office: 3,086
- Public/Civic: 1,133
- Retail: 530
- Hotel/Hospitality: 489
- Industrial: 35

Figure 1-5: The City of Austin, in One Texas Center, is one of the largest employers in the South Central Waterfront.

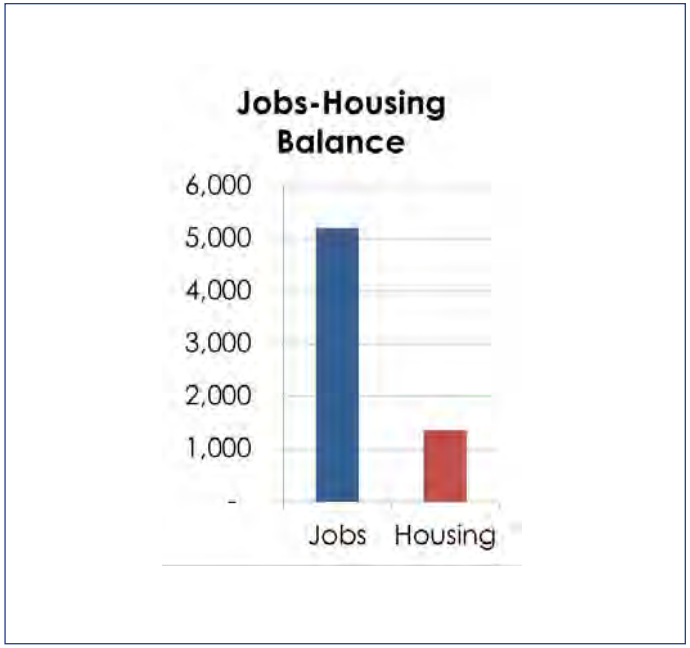


Figure 1-6: The SCW is largely an employment center.

Given the current status as an employment center, the SCW experiences a daily influx of human activity during the workday but is largely devoid of activity after office hours. The SCW is more of a 8/5 (8 hours, five days a week) district instead of a 24/7 district that a more balanced mixed-use center would offer.

The trend, however, is pushing the SCW into a more balanced mix of uses as the demand for central city housing increases. The SPP Report projected that, as redevelopment takes place, the demand for housing will push the number of dwellings towards a balanced 1:1 ratio of jobs to housing. This market trend presents the opportunity, along with the potential to increase transit options to the area, to transform the SCW into a true mixed-use district that is vibrant around the clock.

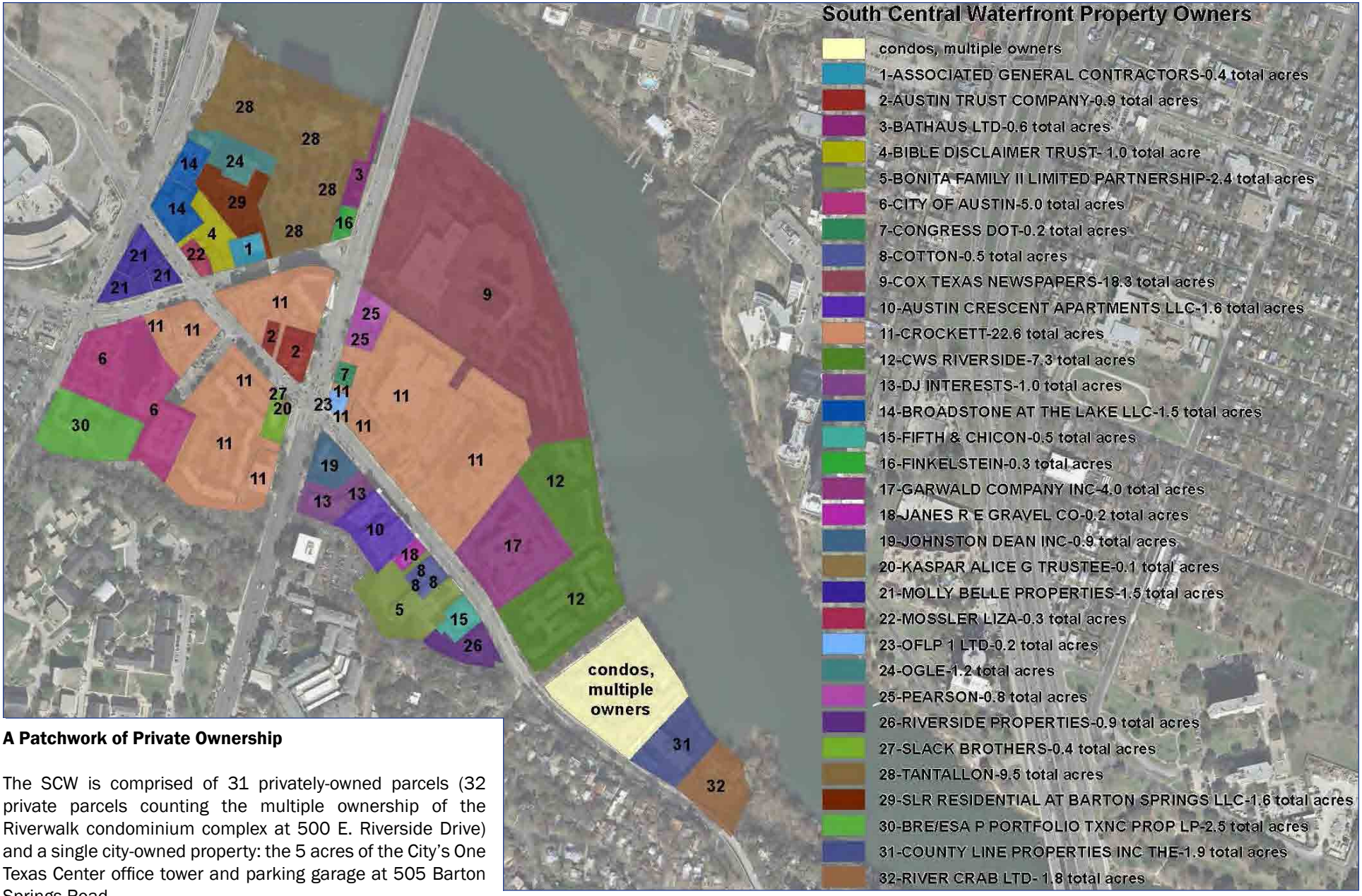


Figure 1-7: Map showing the parcels and ownership which make up the SCW.

A Patchwork of Private Ownership

The SCW is comprised of 31 privately-owned parcels (32 private parcels counting the multiple ownership of the Riverwalk condominium complex at 500 E. Riverside Drive) and a single city-owned property: the 5 acres of the City's One Texas Center office tower and parking garage at 505 Barton Springs Road.

Another challenge to orderly redevelopment of the South Central Waterfront is that it is almost entirely privately owned. Unlike other recent City initiatives, such as the Seaholm and Mueller Redevelopments where the City owned most, if not all, of the properties, the City only controls one 5-acre property in the 97 acre SCW. This many property owners and the often irrational quilt work of parcel shapes presents challenges to coordinating an orderly redevelopment in the SCW.

Reaching an Economic Tipping Point

Given its location in the central city, just south of downtown, the South Central Waterfront is experiencing tremendous and increasing market pressures to redevelop. The SPP Report of 2013 identified properties which are at or likely to reach over the next 20 years a financial "tipping point" where the existing built value vs potential return on investment for redevelopment would create market incentives for change. The SPP Report projected that at least $1.2 billion in private redevelopment is likely under the current market trend and with current entitlements.

Figure 1-8: Redevelopment on South First and Riverside

Figure 1-9: Map indicates properties currently being redeveloped (already underway), PUD entitled (redevelopment parameters have been decided), and the "tipping-point" properties that are the most likely properties to redevelop over the next 20 years, given the trend in market forces.

Change is Opportunity

The South Central Waterfront is currently structured around an inadequate framework of streets that is an accident of history, as chronicled in the next chapter, and a piecemeal development process that has approached city-building on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Given the pressures for redevelopment, the situation is growing urgent. The situation also presents an historic opportunity to leverage the coming change by creating a plan.

Without a cohesive district-wide vision, the best Austin can hope for in this crucial area, equivalent in size of thirty-three blocks in downtown, is a collection of development projects that have stand-alone merit, but will likely do little to address the lack of public green space and pedestrian access along and to the lakefront, and will not provide a cohesive design identity to the district.

Instead, with a compelling vision, the South Central Waterfront can become a model for how a district-wide green infrastructure system, paired with quality urban design, can provide an interconnected framework of public spaces - streets, streetscapes, lakeside trails and parks, and nodes – that provides the framework for orderly redevelopment. A district-wide plan can also coordinate public and private investments to leverage maximum impact, as well as provide for district-wide value capture to fund other community benefits, such as affordable housing. A transformed South Central Waterfront district will not only become a great new neighborhood in the central city and a destination in itself, but will serve as an iconic gateway from South Austin to the downtown and the State Capitol, and an inspiration for the region.

A History of the SCW: 1839 - 1980

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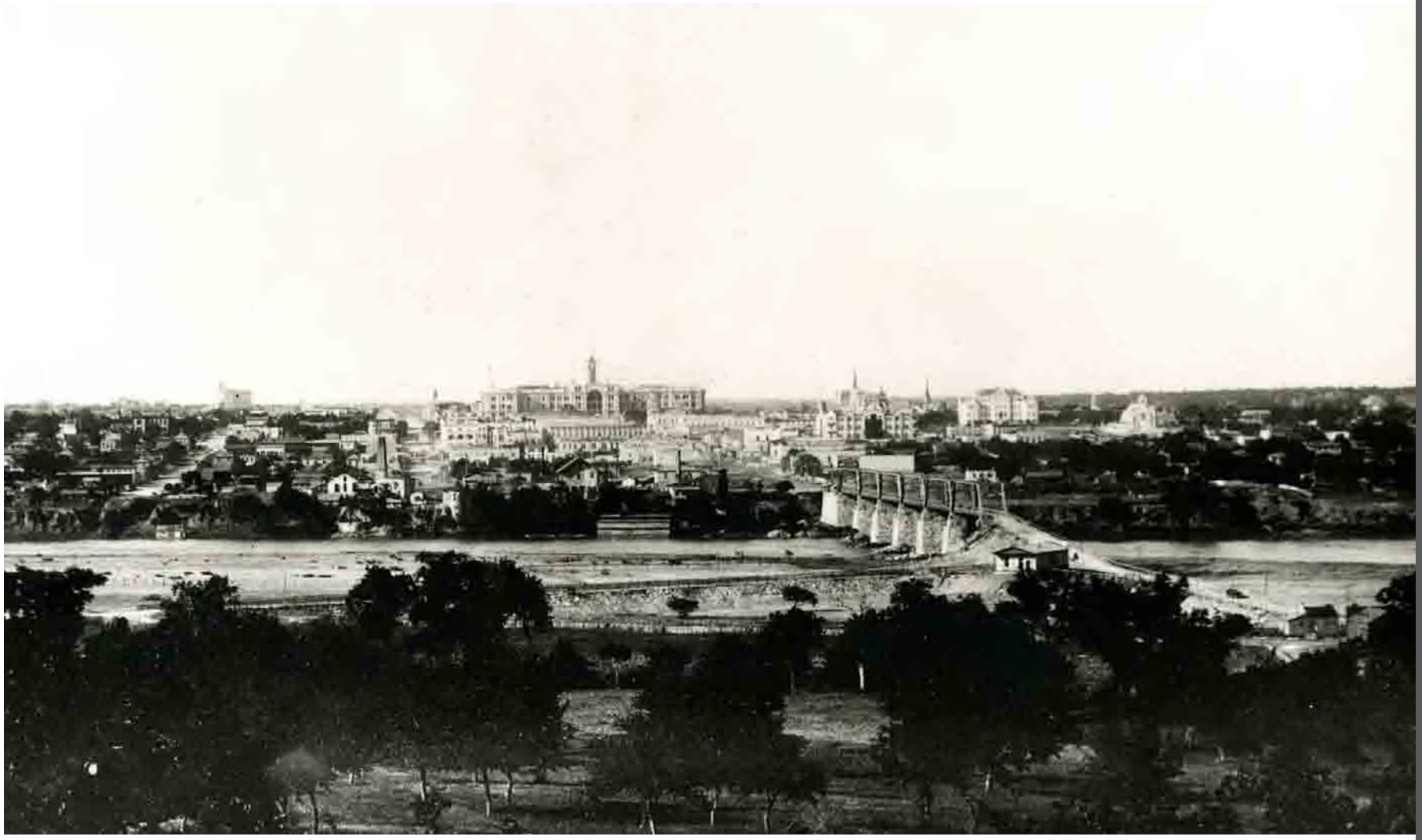
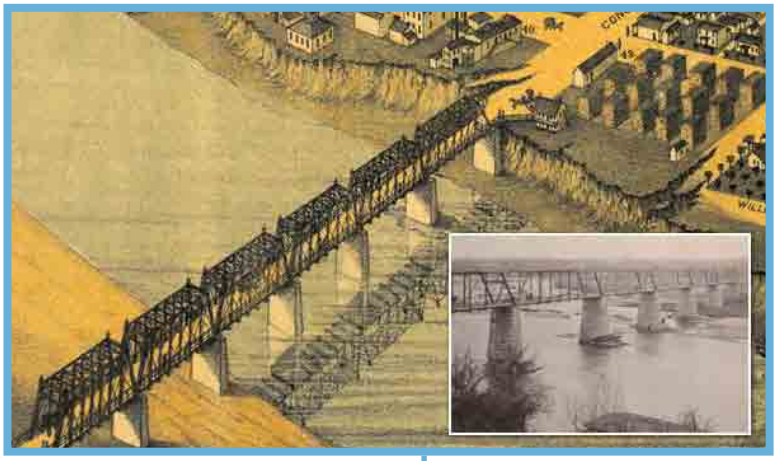


For the first 120 years since Austin was founded the area now known as the South Central Waterfront was river bottom and flood plains. With the creation of Town Lake in 1960 the South Central Waterfront finally had a stable bank and became developable. But unlike the downtown which had a grid of streets and blocks from the beginning, the SCW had no physical framework to orchestrate orderly development.

A History of the SCW: 1839 - 1980

Figure 2-1:
1839: Edwin Waller's "Plan for the City of Austin" created the block system to the north of the Colorado River, lying between Shoal Creek to the west and Waller Creek to the east. Four blocks were reserved as public squares (three of which are intact today) with a grand square reserved for a capitol building for the new republic, on axis to Congress Avenue. This plan has served downtown Austin ever since, providing a clear framework of streets and alleys, parcel layouts, and civic and open spaces that has guided development and generations of redevelopment in an orderly fashion. By contrast, no planning was done south of the Colorado River.

Figure 2-3:
1887: First "permanent" bridge, replacing a series of pontoon bridges. The City of Austin invests $74,000 to build the granite and iron bridge.



1840 1860 1880 1900

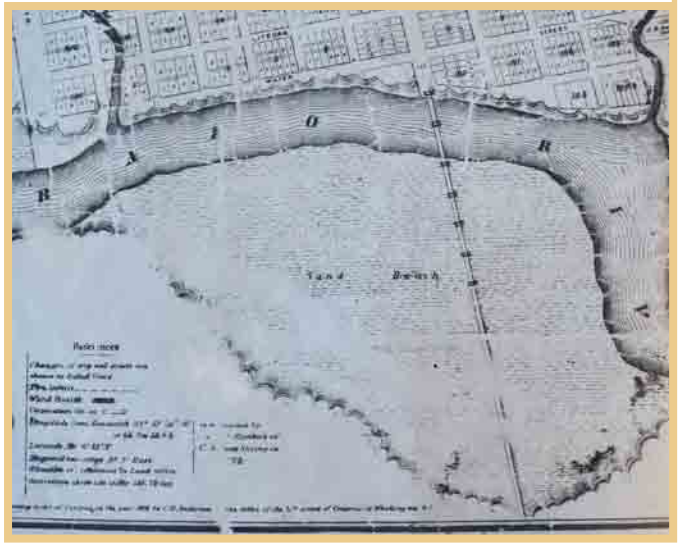


Figure 2-2:
1872: Map indicates that the area now known as the South Central Waterfront is called Sand Beach. The combination of a fixed bridge and a pontoon bridge, which was repeatedly repaired and replaced, connected Congress Avenue to the southern shore.

Figure 2-4:
ca. 1890s: Congress Bridge looking north to capital in the background. Bouldin Creek is in the foreground (where the trees are), and Riverside Drive is seen beyond. The land between Riverside and the river is floodplains, currently the location of the Crockett lands (TxDOT offices) and the Statesman beyond.

Figure 2-5:
ca. 1900s: Photo taken from under the granite/iron bridge on the sandy southern shore.

Figure 2-7:
ca. 1910s: The "new" concrete bridge, built for $209,000, replaces the granite/iron bridge. The abutments and the concrete piers and barrel vaults, are still intact in today's bridge, and were reinforced and widened at the roadway in 1980. All lands under the bridge on the southern shore were prone to constant flooding.

1910 1920 1930

Figure 2-6:
1910: Cattle on the southern shore. Because it was in the floodplain, the land was used for agriculture.

Figure 2-8:
1925: The hatched roadways on the map are paved streets. The southern shore, under constant threat of flooding, is undeveloped and used for cattle and crops.

Figure 2-9:
ca. 1930s: Flooding of the Colorado River was a constant threat.

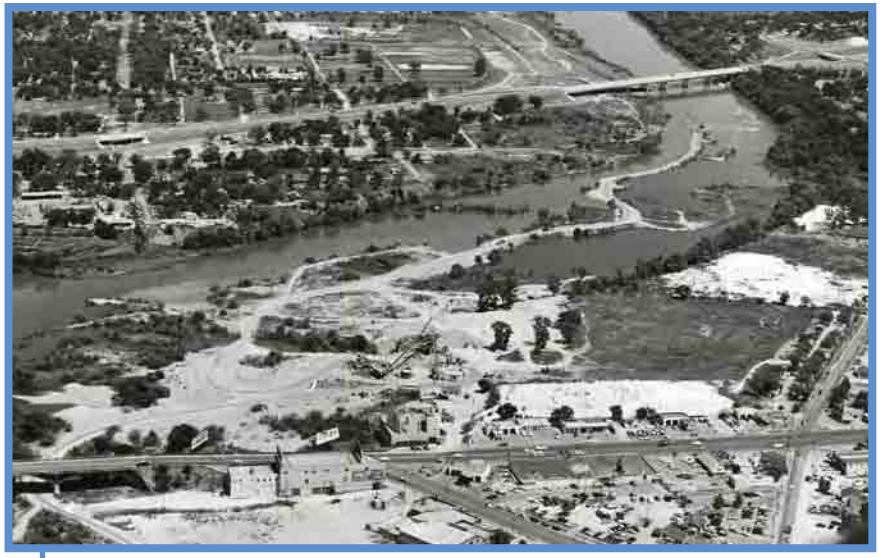


Figure 2-11:
1950s: Some commercial development along S. Congress Avenue, which was above the flood levels, begins to emerge while flood-prone areas were restricted to "industrial use," in this case, excavation of sand.

1940 1950 1960

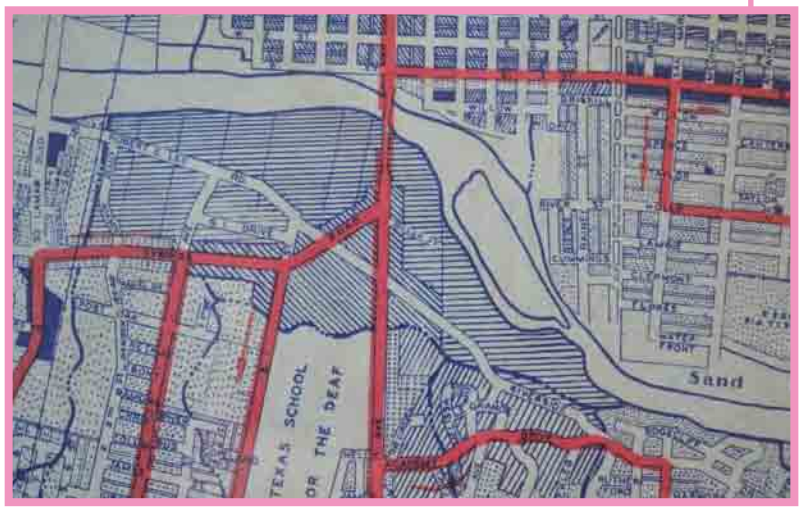


Figure 2-10:
1949: Zoning map shows the frequently flooded area as "industrial" (horizontal hatch), whereas the area above the floodplains are shown as "business" (angled hatch).

Figure 2-12:
1962: With the completion of the Longhorn Dam (1960), the impoundment and creation of Town Lake was complete. For the first time, the shoreline along the South Central Waterfront was established at a constant level, opening up the previous flood plains to development

Figure 2-13:
ca. 1960s: With the creation of Town Lake, early planning began to imagine a trail along the shoreline. This early plan, by the office of architect Alan Taniguchi, shows potential new lakeside restaurants adjacent to the trail, and imagines a new road and bridge connection through the properties now owned by the Statesman/Cox and the Crocketts, and connecting on the north shore to San Jacinto Blvd. and Trinity Street.

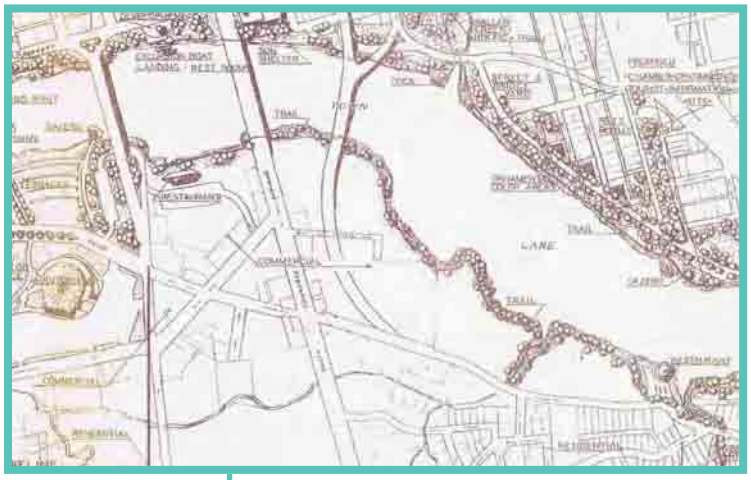


Figure 2-15:
1980: The original 1910 concrete bridge is reinforced with new cantilevers to expand the road width to accommodate more travel lanes. In the process of reinforcing the bridge, new concrete coffer beams were installed under the expanded roadway, creating, by accident, the perfect urban bat habitat. The coffered bridge reinforcement has been replicated at other locations throughout the region, specifically to create new bat habitat.

1970

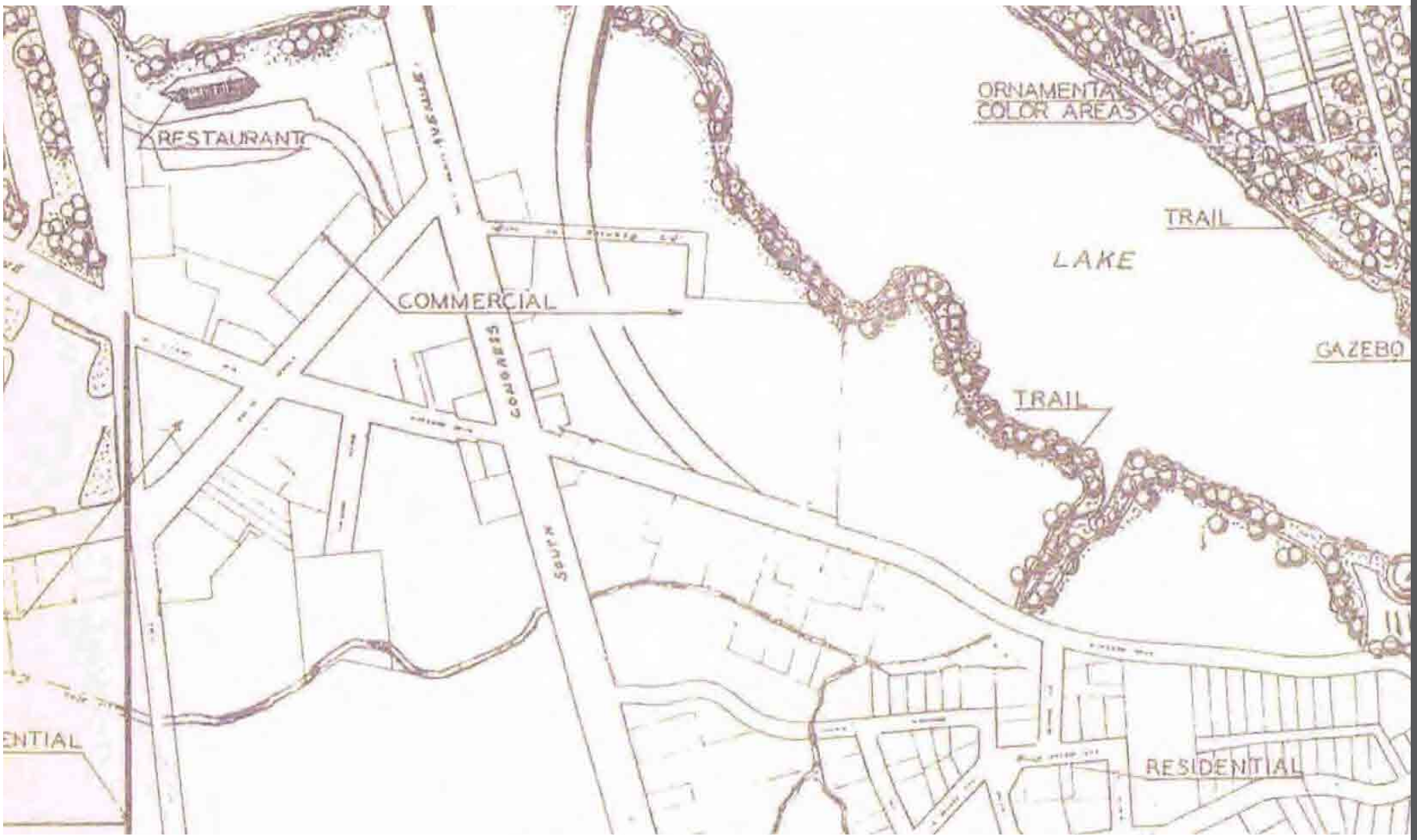
1980

Figure 2-14:
1965: Parking lots begin to show up along the shoreline between Congress and South First Street.

Figure 2-16:
1980: With the stabilization of the shoreline and the expansion of the Congress Street bridge, the stage is set for development in the area. The construction of the Hyatt Hotel, 1984, set off concerns about this and future development along the shore. As a result, the City launched the Town Lake Corridor Study, which became a landmark document for waterfront planning.

Waterfront Planning: 1985 - 2013

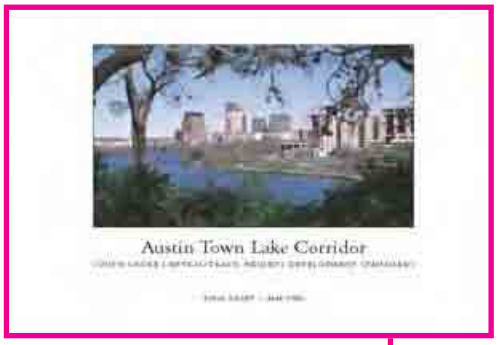
3



Planning studies for the waterfront that date back 30 years have consistently called for harmonious development which respects the tremendous asset of the lake and shoreline. Planning studies specifically for the vicinity of the South Central Waterfront over the past 15 years have consistently noted that a lack of a good network of streets and blocks is a prime obstacle to harmonious development.

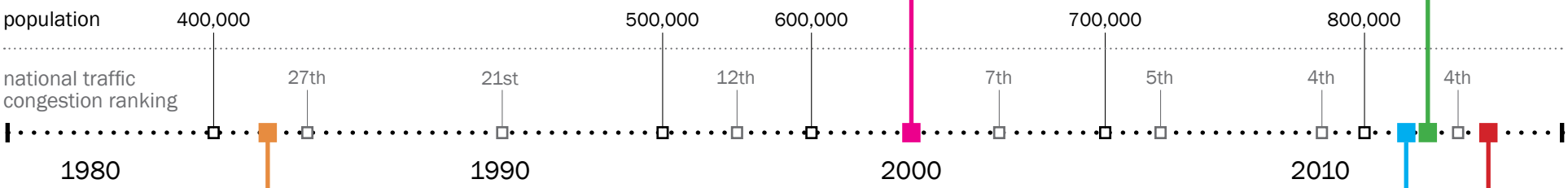
Waterfront Planning: 1985 - 2013

In the last 30 years, the City of Austin has authored or participated in the production of five studies examining in part or as a whole, the South Central Waterfront. As instructed by City Council, the findings and recommendations from these studies, along with input from the public and stakeholders, have substantially informed the South Central Waterfront Initiative.

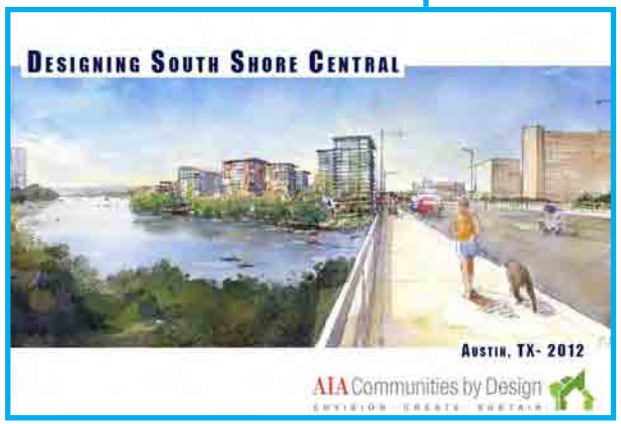


South Shore Central/Travis Heights Development Standards Study (ROMA Study)

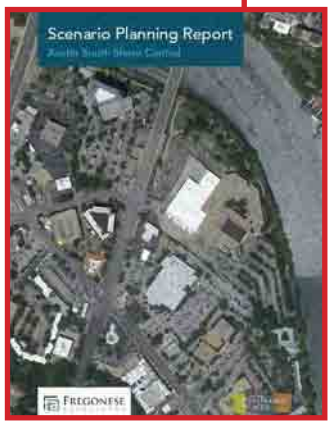
UT School of Architecture Texas Urban Futures Lab Study



Town Lake Corridor Study



Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) Report



Sustainable Places Project (SPP) Report

1985: Town Lake Corridor Study

Created in response to new development along the lakeshore, the Town Lake Corridor Study established initial benchmark planning and goals to promote harmonious growth along the lakefront while preserving the unique quality of the river corridor. The Town Lake Corridor Study's goals were codified with the 1986 Waterfront Overlay ordinance. The waterfront ordinance remains in effect today, much as it was when first enacted.

The Study emphasized that it was not a comprehensive plan, and recommended a follow-up long-range comprehensive planning program for the waterfront. The comprehensive planning initiative was never undertaken.

Many issues identified in the Study still trouble the South Central Waterfront (see Figure 3-1), notably, limited public access to the waterfront, single-purpose development, and an urban edge that is both aesthetically monotonous and harsh to pedestrians.

Figure 3-1: The South Central Waterfront has many parking lots and presents a mostly monotonous and pedestrian unfriendly urban edge.

Key goals include:

- Provide physical and visual access to the waterfront, and promote pedestrian access to and use of the corridor.
- Create superior planning, design and mix of uses.
- Protect and improve water quality.
- Foster cooperation between the City, neighborhood, and private land owners to realize the potential for the waterfront.
- Commence comprehensive planning for the waterfront.

2000: South Shore Central Study (ROMA Study)

In reaction to a proposed condominium development, the City commissioned the ROMA Design Group to work with a citizen task force to study and recommend updated development standards. The study area for this report matches the boundaries of the South Central Waterfront Initiative. The ROMA study identified two principal impediments to orderly redevelopment in the area. The first problem was inadequate existing development regulations. The second was a lack of public infrastructure, specifically a framework of streets around which orderly development could occur.

In fact, the ROMA study stated that orderly redevelopment could only be achieved by designing and building an infrastructure framework (a new grid of streets, open spaces, pedestrian amenities, and better streetscapes—see Figure 3-2) to allow for a rational intensification of development. Under the ROMA plan property owners could earn the right to build to more intensive standards by helping to pay for or build the infrastructure framework. However, the study's recommendations were never adopted by City Council.

Figure 3-2: The illustrative plan showing the infrastructure framework proposed in the ROMA Study.

Key findings and recommendations include:

- Existing regulations are inadequate to encourage the orderly redevelopment of this area.
- A public infrastructure framework is needed for orderly redevelopment.
- Incentives should be established for property owners to contribute to the area's "public framework" of shoreline access, open spaces, shared parking facilities, and additional public and private streets.

2012: Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) Report

Figure 3-3: Design sketch showing potential point-tower development with expanded open spaces along and to the waterfront.

One of the responsibilities of the Council appointed Waterfront Planning Advisory Board (WPAB) is to provide recommendations to the City on policy and planning to promote excellence in design, development and protection of the waterfront. In 2011 the WPAB identified the South Shore Central sub-district of the Waterfront Overlay as the most likely to face increasing redevelopment challenges. To address this concern the WPAB, with City Council support, made a successful application for assistance from the American Institute of Architects Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program. As part of the SDAT program, Austin hosted a team of national sustainable design experts who worked with over 200 citizens, City staff and officials, and other stakeholders during three days in June 2012.

The final SDAT Report in 2012 cautioned that "A Code is not a Vision" and warned that the provisions of the Waterfront Overlay ordinance would not, in isolation, lead to orderly redevelopment. Like the ROMA Study, the report underscored that a physical framework of open spaces, streets and pedestrian connections was required. The SDAT went further, though, and proposed that this framework be designed as a green infrastructure network which integrates the natural and built environments to raise the environmental quality and beauty of a place.

Figure 3-4: The illustrative plan showing the infrastructure framework proposed in the SDAT Study.

The SDAT Report highlighted the opportunity to explore district-wide value capture scenarios to leverage private redevelopment investments to help finance public infrastructure and other community benefits. In addition, the SDAT Report introduced the notion that development of affordable housing should be part of any redevelopment vision for the area, and the Report set the goal that 15% of the housing development be affordable units.

Key findings and recommendations include:

- "A Code is not a Vision."
- Create a "green infrastructure" network of streets, open space, pedestrian connections and nodes.
- Create methods of district-wide value capture to help finance community benefits.
- Create strategies and methods to include significant affordable housing .

2013: University of Texas School of Architecture: Urban Futures Lab Study

The Texas Urban Futures Lab (TxUFL) is an applied research initiative of the Graduate Program in Urban Design at the UT School of Architecture. For spring semester, 2013, TxUFL created a redevelopment scenario for the South Central Waterfront area.

Like the SDAT, the TxUFL emphasized a green infrastructure network of streets and open spaces, and valued the inclusion of affordable housing development. However, this scenario plan focused on accommodating families and thus envisioned the average dwelling unit sizes to be larger than the existing average. As a result, there were fewer total dwellings and fewer total residents at maximum build out.

The TxUFL scenario included an urban rail system and explored the rail's bridge and transit stop as place-making design opportunities.

Figure 3-5: Envisioning design possibilities for an urban rail bridge.

Key recommendations include:

- Creating family friendly housing with larger but fewer units overall.
- Maximizing green infrastructure (including green roofs, water conservation, native plants, sponge parks, and rain gardens).
- Incorporate urban rail into area master planning.

2013: Sustainable Places Project

During 2012-2013 the City of Austin participated as a regional partner in the Sustainable Places Project (SPP), funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A key SPP initiative was the development of a computer-based analytic tool, known as Envision Tomorrow Plus, to assess and compare the financial, environmental and social impacts of potential redevelopment scenarios.

Using Envision Tomorrow Plus, the SPP modeled three redevelopment scenarios for the future of the South Central Waterfront area: Scenario 1 following the current trend and existing regulations; Scenario 2 based on the vision of the Report of the Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT); and Scenario 3 from the UT School of Architecture/Texas Urban Futures Lab.

In a public demonstration of the analytic tool in May 2013, the Sustainable Places Project compared the three scenarios for the South Central Waterfront across thirty-plus performance indicators, including: return on investment and financial feasibility, impacts to water quality, impacts to municipal budgets, potential for district-wide value capture, jobs-to-housing ratios, overall density, walkability, net increase/decrease in open space, and energy savings from green infrastructure.

Figure 3-6: Example of development **without** a master plan. Access to lake is blocked.

Figure 3-7: Example of development **with** a master plan. Access to lake is achieved.

Key findings include:

- Current regulations will not guarantee or achieve waterfront access, affordable housing, superior urban design, better water quality, or increase public green space.
- Master planned scenarios would capture more revenue than the existing trend projects.
- Master planned scenarios create hundreds of affordable housing units vs. none guaranteed by existing trend.

Public Engagement: 2014

4

Since January 2014, the South Central Waterfront Initiative has engaged over 600 Austinites in a vigorous civic dialogue that has included neighborhood residents, land owners, civic leaders, advocates, and design and planning professionals.

Public Engagement: 2014

When the City Council launched the South Central Waterfront Initiative in August 2013, it instructed staff to vigorously engage with the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board (WPAB), area stakeholders and the broader community to help create a vision for the future and recommendations on how to get there. The Council also directed that the results of this community engagement should be reported back to the Council as soon as possible.

For its part, the WPAB established its own Stakeholder Outreach Committee (SOC) comprised of fourteen representatives, including three representatives from the WPAB, two property owners, adjacent neighborhood associations, an affordable housing expert, a business owner, and others. The SOC was instrumental in assisting with outreach to promote community participation at planning events and were active participants themselves.

In the first four months of 2014 the City worked with community partners to host a series of public engagement events, involving over 600 participants. These events included:

- Two Waterfront Walkabouts: guided walking tours of the district, to explore and discover the challenges and opportunities in the South Central Waterfront first hand.
- Three Waterfront Talkabouts: public lectures and panel discussions, featuring local and national experts on best practices on waterfront development.
- A five day Vision + Design Intensive: multiple meetings and workshops with neighbors, property owners, city staff and other stakeholders to interact with teams of designers, planners, economists, engineers, public artists and other experts in exploring the area's potential.

Based on input from this vigorous community engagement, and building on previous planning efforts and ideas explored during the Vision + Design Intensive, staff met with the WPAB to review a preliminary draft Vision Framework. The draft Vision Framework outlines how the South Central Waterfront could redevelop to support a lively, attractive pedestrian environment, create great public spaces, include affordable housing, and enhance public connections to and along the waterfront. The draft Vision Framework was presented to the City Council's Comprehensive Planning and Advisory Committee in June 2014.

January 11, 2014:

Waterfront WALKabout 1

Walking the Talk

174 people, many with children, toddlers in strollers and dogs on leashes, hiked the 1.5 mile walking tour around the South Central Waterfront. Participants were led by a marching band and stopped along the way to learn about issues and opportunities from city staff and other local experts.

People saw for themselves the good, bad, and ugly with regards to walkability and connectivity, open space and trail connections, natural habitat and nature in the city, old and under-construction development, and systems for dealing with water runoff and water quality. As important, the Walk provided informal opportunities for neighbors, property owners, public officials, local experts, and others to meet, converse and learn from each other as they walked together.

January 21, 2014:

Waterfront TALKabout 1

Imagining Alternatives Futures

116 people attended the kickoff lectures and panel discussion featuring Harris Steinberg FAIA, Director of PennPraxis at the University of Pennsylvania, and John Fregonese, principal of Fregonese Associates, Portland, OR. Steinberg was the team leader of the 2012 AIA/SDAT, and Fregonese was the key consultant to the 2013 SPP analysis of scenarios for the South Central Waterfront (see pages 18-19).

Steinberg and Fregonese presented key points from their earlier work on Austin's waterfront and shared examples of waterfront developments around North America that showcased great public spaces, sustainable green infrastructure, and equitable development.

Steinberg called for a cohesive district-wide master plan approach to redevelopment, as opposed to the status quo, parcel-by-parcel development. Fregonese's analysis quantified that a framework master plan scenario outperforms the status quo on over thirty different indicators, including expansion of open space, decreasing impervious cover, elevating environmental benefit, and providing affordable housing.

2014

January

Figure 4-1: Walkers stop next to the Congress Street Bridge to hear from a bat conservation expert.

Figure 4-2: Station Center, Union City, CA: This master-planned district leveraged the collective financial investments to support development of Station Center, a green and an innovative affordable housing community with commercial space that provides 157 homes for low-income working families or individuals.

February 12, 2014:

Waterfront TALKabout 2

Green Spaces | Urban Places

73 people attended this Talkabout highlighting inspirational designs from elsewhere that show how extraordinary and intimate urban waterfront parks, pockets of open space, and green streets can enrich the urban landscape. The speakers were Dean J. Almy, PhD., Director of the Graduate Program in Urban Design at UT, and Daniel Woodroffe, founder and president of DWG, an award-winning landscape architecture firm. Both speakers were past members of the WPAB.

Almy led the Texas Urban Futures Lab study for the South Central Waterfront (see page 19), and illustrated how the area could redevelop to significantly increase the functional green space, even as it provides a tripling of dwellings and accommodates a new urban rail system. Woodroffe, who is part of the Waller Creek design team, pointed to opportunities to integrate nature into the district, providing landscaped nodes that provide enjoyment, beauty, and environmental services.

Figure 4-6: South Waterfront in Portland, OR.

Courtesy Design Workshop

Figure 4-5: Bagby St. in Midtown, Houston.

February

March

Figure 4-3: Teardrop Park, in NYC, shows how nodes of nature can be woven into the urban landscape, even in cities as dense as NYC.

Figure 4-4: Attenders participated in a picture poll to indicate design preferences on green streets, waterfront parks, urban trails, and green nodes – all components of a potential green infrastructure network for the South Central Waterfront.

March 24, 2014:

Waterfront TALKabout 3

Smart Strategies to Fund our Future

78 people attended the Talkabout which focused on creative approaches to financing and implementing a community vision and highlighting examples of how other cities have worked in tandem with the private sector to fund building great public spaces. The speakers were Abe Farkas, PhD, Director of Development Services at EcoNorthwest, a consulting firm from Portland, OR, and Rebecca Leonard, President of Design Workshop, a landscape architecture and planning firm.

Farkas pointed to the South Waterfront in Portland, OR as an example of how a master-plan was implemented with partnership between 34 private properties and the City to create a 130 acre, mixed-use, transit oriented Eco-District which includes senior and affordable housing. Leonard, of Design Workshop, talked about her firm's project in Midtown, Houston and the transformation of Bagby Street with green infrastructure. The award-winning street was funded through a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone, providing a win-win for the City taxpayers, pedestrians, and property owners alike.

Attenders participated in a poster poll to weigh in on potential values and principles to guide a vision plan.

April 5, 2014:

Waterfront WALKabout 2

Imagining Future Walking Connections

55 people joined this 1.5 mile walk to imagine potential future pedestrian connections in the South Central Waterfront. The community explored a potential trail connection on the Texas School for the Deaf's property along E. Bouldin Creek, and a potential green street connection from E. Riverside directly to the waterfront.

At each of the stops, walkers formed small groups to review handouts and discuss ideas for turning parking lots into green streets and for creating recreation trails along the creek.

April 25 - 28, 2014:

Vision + Design Intensive

170 people participated in the five-day series of workshops, meetings and drop-in studios, held on the campus of the Texas School for the Deaf. Residents, property owners, stakeholders, city staff and others worked with local and national experts, including designers, planners, landscape architects, economic development experts, engineers, public artists and other experts to explore the area's potential.

Many small group meetings took place over the five days, providing lots of opportunities for neighbors, property owners, WPAB members, and experts to talk, listen, and learn from each other.

April

Figure 4-7: Participants of the walk next to the Austin American-Statesman.

Figure 4-8: Chair of the WPAB, a neighborhood resident, and planning and design professionals look at a study model in the open design studio to discuss pros and cons of different redevelopment ideas.

Figure 4-9: A group meeting with members of the WPAB, the Stakeholder Outreach Committee, and a finance expert.

Community Values

5

Vision Statement: In the future the South Central Waterfront will have enhanced connections to and along the waterfront, a beautiful public realm that supports a lively and attractive pedestrian environment, great public spaces, a network of streets and open spaces that integrates public art, landscaping and green strategies into the infrastructure, and affordable housing opportunities. A transformed South Central Waterfront will become a great new mixed-use urban neighborhood in the central city and a destination in itself which offers opportunity for everyone to live, work and play. It will have a distinctive and coherent sense of place which will serve as an iconic gateway to the downtown and the State Capitol, and an inspiration for the region.

Community Values for the South Central Waterfront

In 2014 alone, the SCW Initiative engaged over 600 citizens to ascertain the community's highest aspirations for the future of the South Central Waterfront. Certain themes resonated throughout surveys and poster sessions, workshops, focus groups, open studios, and informal conversations.

Common themes have been organized according to the following Community Values:

Public Access To and Along the Waterfront:

Increase pedestrian connections to the waterfront throughout the district and from adjacent neighborhoods with enhanced streetscapes and new street connections, trails, and linear green spaces, and increase and enhance public gathering spaces along the water's edge.

Affordable Housing:

Include significant affordable housing development which serves a range of incomes and needs, including workforce housing and families.

Transportation Options:

Enhance walkability and connectivity throughout the district and integrate a variety of transportation options (including bicycling, transit and driving) to reduce pollution and increase connectivity locally and citywide.

Water Quality & the Open Space Network:

Incorporate landscaping throughout the district and create a pedestrian-linked network of publicly-accessible green nodes* that contribute to the beauty of the district and provide ecological services such as reduction of heat-island effect and conservation and treatment of water resources.

People-focused Design:

Prioritize the public realm and the pedestrian experience in the siting and design of new buildings, streets and open spaces to contribute to a people-centered and coherent sense of place.

Integration of Public Art:

Create a unique identity for the district through the integration of public art into the streetscape, landscape, architecture, and infrastructure.

Financial Feasibility:

Create a viable and long-term financial strategy to coordinate and leverage public and private investments to build and maintain the public realm and to support creation of affordable housing.

** Green nodes are places that intersect with pedestrian paths which add visual appeal with landscaping and pedestrian amenities.*

Most of the Community Values that emerged during the public engagement for the SCW Initiative have been echoed in previous studies and policies that date back to the 1985 Town Lake Corridor Studio. Affordable housing is a more recently identified community value, and it has been integral to studies from 2012 onward (see table below).

Community Values identified in SCW Initiative	SCW Input	Previous Studies				Policy
	2014: SCW Initiative	**2013** Sustainable Places Project	**2013** UT Texas Urban Futures Lab	**2012** Sustainable Design Assessment Team	**2000** ROMA Report	**1985** Town Lake Corridor Studio
Public Access to waterfront	X	X	X	X	X	X
Affordable Housing	X	X	X	X		
Transportation Options	X	X	X	X		X
Water Quality & Open Space Network	X	X	X	X	X	X
People-focused Design	X	X	X	X	X	X
Integration of Public Art	X		X	X		
Financial Feasibility	X	X	X	X	X	

Figure 5-1: Participants weigh-in on Poster Poll at a public lecture event.

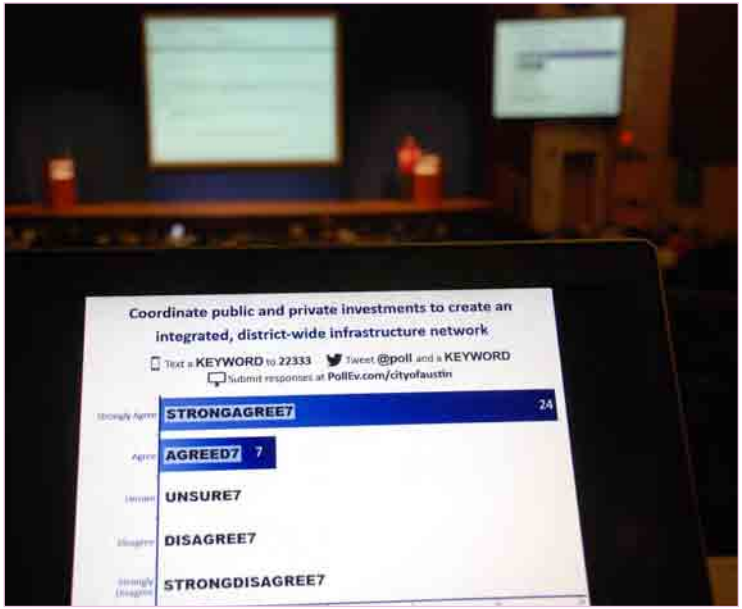


Figure 5-2: Participants use cell phones and tablets at key-pad polling at a public workshop.

Organizing Community Values:
The Quadruple Bottom Line and *Imagine Austin*

During the winter/spring 2014 public engagement, the planners and speakers introduced an organizing framework to the public, the Quadruple Bottom Line, as a way to think about community values. The Quadruple Bottom Line begins with the now well-known notion of the Triple Bottom Line, or the "three pillars of sustainability," (Environmental, Economic, and Social) and adds a fourth criterion of Place-Making. Place-Making recognizes that successful places must also be delightful, or as Buckminster Fuller famously summarized, "If the solution is not beautiful, I know that it is wrong."

These four Quadruple Bottom Line categories - Environmental, Economic, Social, and Place-Making – also align with the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan's vision topics of: "Nature and City," "Creativity & Economy," "Healthy & Affordable," and "Compact & Connected," respectively.

Organizing the Community Values for the SCW within a framework of the Quadruple Bottom Line and the Imagine Austin vision topics emphasizes the opportunity for the South Central Waterfront to become a model district for an urban neighborhood in the heart of the city which reflects Austin's highest aspirations in a place-specific way.

Figure 5-3: People on the Congress Bridge waiting for the bats.

To be comprehensive, the **Community Values** for the SCW must address these four Image Austin/Bottom Line categories:

Nature & City:

Sustainably manage natural resources (including water), use green infrastructure to protect environmentally-sensitive places, and integrate nature and natural systems into the city. This category encompasses the **Community Values** of transportation options (including walking and bicycling), water quality, and open space network.

Creativity & Economy:

Invest in the workforce, education, entrepreneurs, local businesses and the creative economy. This **Community Value** incorporates the creative sector and public arts as well as the necessity for economically feasible development, or development that works for both the private and public sectors.

Healthy & Affordable:

Increase affordability and create programs for a healthier Austin. This category includes the Community Values of affordable housing and access to and along the waterfront for all ages and abilities to create an active, healthy district.

Compact & Connected:

Invest in a compact and connected city that increases access and mobility options for all. Under this category, the Community Values include a district that is more walkable and bikeable and that uses architecture, public art, & urban design to create a sense of place.

Balancing Community Values across the South Central Waterfront:

Organizing the Community Values within the framework of the Quadruple Bottom Line and the Imagine Austin vision topics illustrate that every value contributes an essential ingredient to the future of the South Central Waterfront. To achieve success, all Community Values must be addressed at once instead of setting up a competition that emphasizes one set of values over another. Pursuing any one of these values exclusively as the single goal for the district makes the other values difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

For instance, focusing only on maximizing open space along the waterfront at the exclusion of all other values potentially scuttles the overall economic feasibility of achieving affordable housing and the building of new street and trail connections to increase walkability.

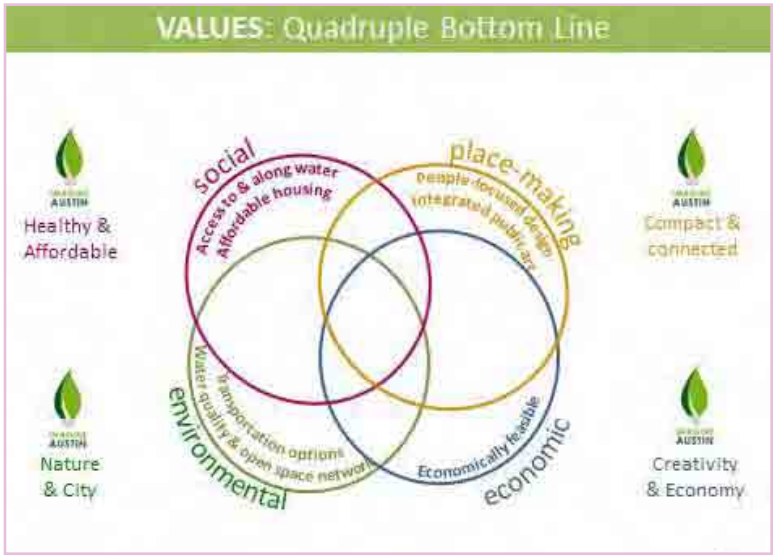


Figure 5-5: **Community Values**, listed in the inner circles, are interdependent and all must be achieved and balanced, district-wide, in order for the South Central Waterfront to reach its full potential.

Figure 5-4: Paddleboarders on Lady Bird Lake.

Or, at the other extreme, focusing solely on providing affordable housing could potentially limit the financial ability of those few parcels located adjacent to the waterfront to increase shoreline open space and access.

No single parcel or development will be able to address every community value by itself (for instance, only the few parcels abutting the waterfront can directly impact the quality of the public spaces at the shoreline). Instead, the community values must be applied across the district so that each parcel contributes a strategic piece towards achieving a district-wide vision.

A District-wide Vision Framework to Realize Community Values

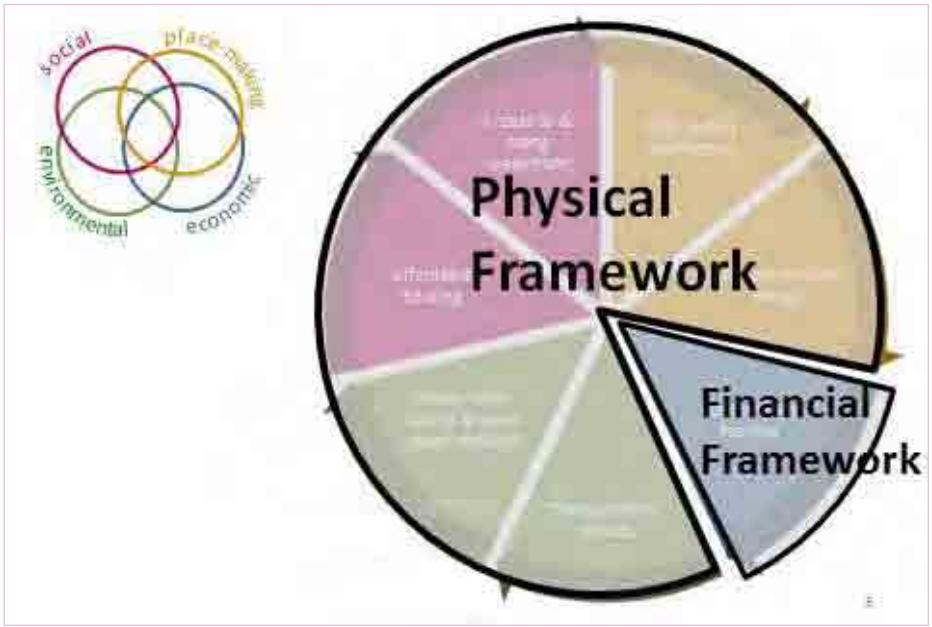
Focusing on strategies that address Community Values in a balanced approach across the full SCW district – all 97 acres with 31 private parcels and one city parcel – require a place-specific design approach. Most of the Community Values for the SCW have a direct relationship to the physical design and redevelopment of the SCW. If successful, the community will be able to see and experience the realization of these values in tangible ways, through the design of streets, open spaces and buildings, as they live, work and play in the SCW district.

Collectively, the values that can be illustrated in the design and arrangement of the physical environment can be considered as part of a Physical Framework for the SCW.

Likewise, the collective private redevelopment investments that are projected to be at least $1.2 billion over the next twenty years in the SCW can be considered a district-wide value to be harnessed, in tandem with public investments, as part of a district-wide Financial Framework to support the SCW vision.

Figure 5-6: **Communities Values** illustrated pie chart. Each contributes an essential ingredient to the quadruple bottom line.

Figure 5-7: **Community Values** arranged as part of the Physical Framework or the Financial Framework.



Change is inevitable for the SCW and it is rapidly on its way. In order for the SCW to transform in a way that reflects the Community Values, the South Central Waterfront needs a Physical Framework to direct the physical improvements needed in the district, and a Financial Framework, which leverages and captures the values of the coming redevelopment. One more ingredient is required: to jump start the Physical Framework, the City of Austin will need to be a key player and make public investments that the private development community can follow and build upon.

In summary, the three key requirements to realize Community Values for the South Central Waterfront include:

- A **Physical Framework** for a district-wide vision, not a parcel-by-parcel approach, to provide an integrated network of connecting streets, pedestrian connections, open spaces, and green infrastructure.

- A **Financial Framework** to capture the district-wide value of investments, both public and private, in order to realize the Physical Framework and to include the creation of affordable housing.

- An **Active Partner Framework** that has the City of Austin as a proactive stakeholder making strategic capital investments in helping to bring about the public/private partnerships required to achieve the Physical and Financial Framework goals.

The following three sections of this report address each of these framework requirements in turn.

Physical Framework

6

The first requirement for guiding the future of the SCW in a positive direction is: **A Physical Framework** for a district-wide vision, not a parcel-by-parcel approach, to provide a connecting network of streets, pedestrian connections, open spaces, and green infrastructure.

Physical Framework

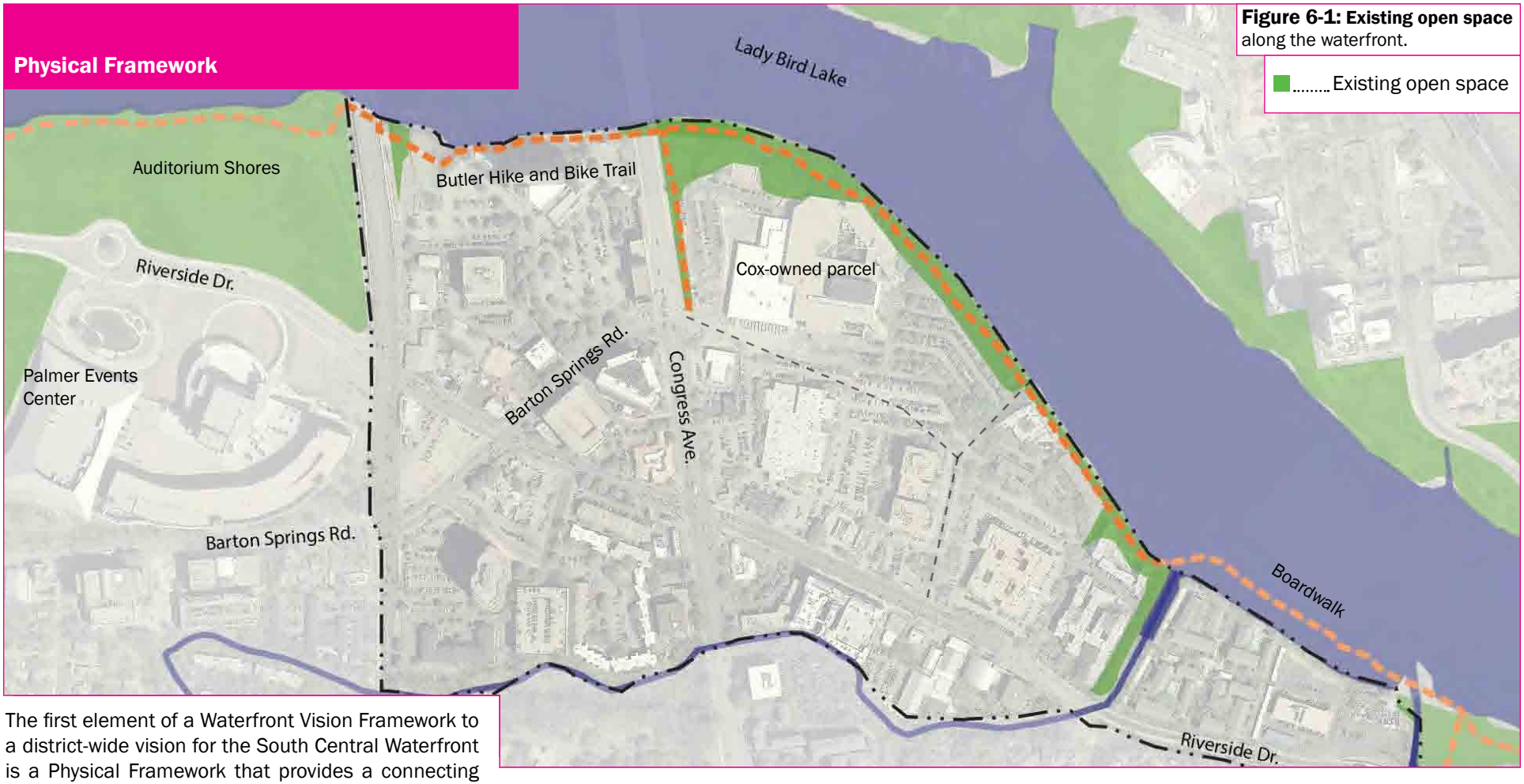


Figure 6-1: Existing open space along the waterfront.

The first element of a Waterfront Vision Framework to a district-wide vision for the South Central Waterfront is a Physical Framework that provides a connecting network of streets, pedestrian access ways, open spaces, and green infrastructure. A parcel-by-parcel approach, inherent in a zoning-only solution to guiding redevelopment, will not deliver this.

The South Central Waterfront Initiative recognizes that the existing streets in the area are generally lacking in quality streetscaping and that upgraded streetscaping for Congress Avenue, Riverside Drive, Barton Springs Road, and South First Street will need to be addressed as the area redevelops.

The Physical Framework will take an integrated approach to seeing how new streets and redesigned streetscapes can work with the existing street grid and property ownership to promote connectivity and walkability throughout the district. Such an integrated and coordinated approach to the street infrastructure would set the stage for creating a cohesive environment for quality urban design to occur.

Although the various elements dealt with by the Physical Framework exist and function simultaneously as an integrated whole, for the purpose of explaining the Physical Framework it is best to consider these various elements separately as distinct layers of the framework.

Layer 1: Existing Open Space In Context

The one significant opportunity for shoreline open space in the South Central Waterfront (see Figure 6-1) is found on a single parcel, the Austin American Statesman newspaper, owned by the Cox Group. This 1,800 foot stretch of shoreline along the Statesman parcel includes the popular Austin American Statesman's Bat Observation Park adjacent to the Ann Richardson Bridge at Congress Avenue. Beginning June 2014 the open space along the Statesman site is now connected to the east along a short trail to the launch point of the new Lady Bird Lake Boardwalk.

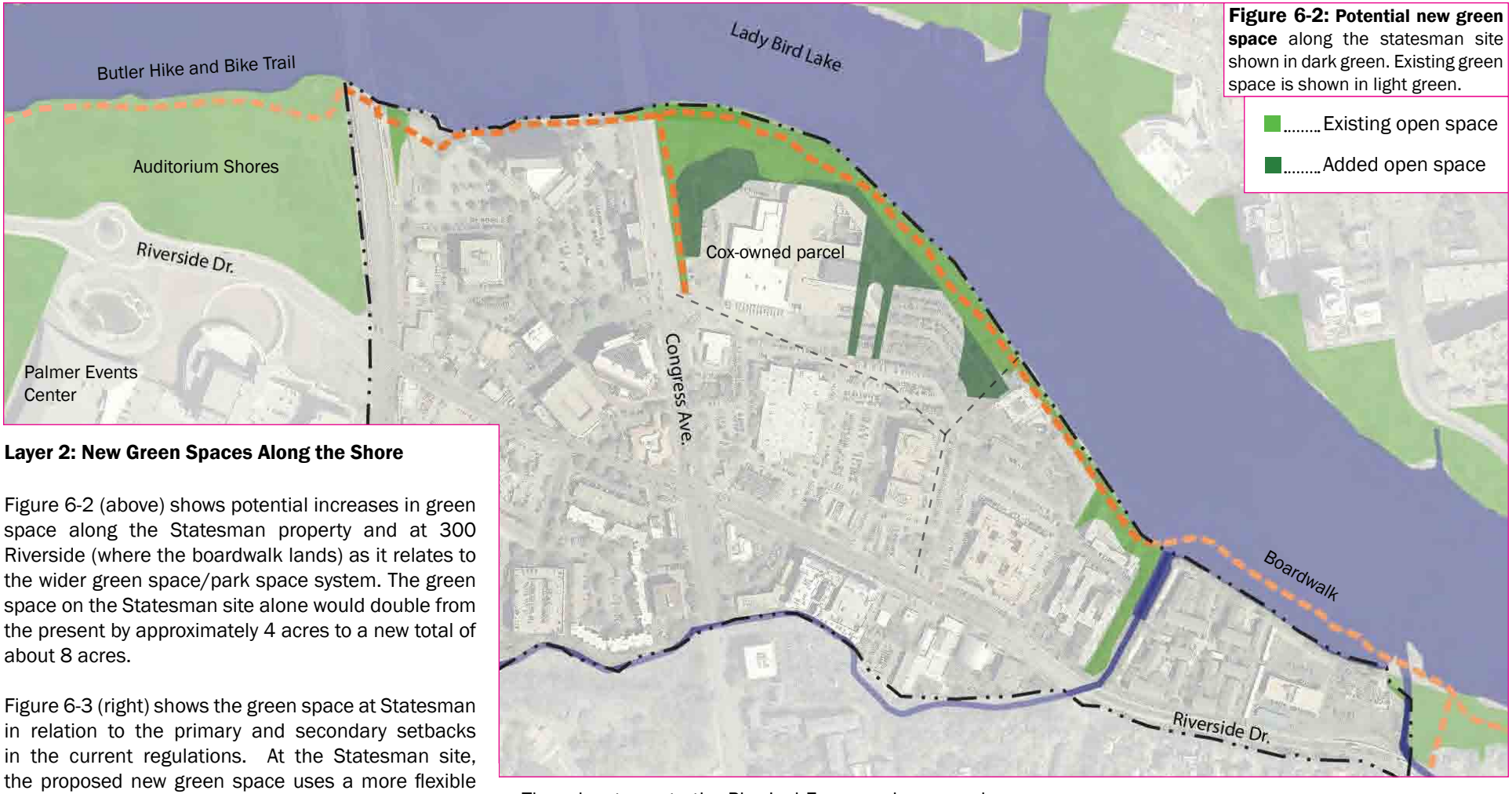


Figure 6-2: Potential new green space along the statesman site shown in dark green. Existing green space is shown in light green.

Layer 2: New Green Spaces Along the Shore

Figure 6-2 (above) shows potential increases in green space along the Statesman property and at 300 Riverside (where the boardwalk lands) as it relates to the wider green space/park space system. The green space on the Statesman site alone would double from the present by approximately 4 acres to a new total of about 8 acres.

Figure 6-3 (right) shows the green space at Statesman in relation to the primary and secondary setbacks in the current regulations. At the Statesman site, the proposed new green space uses a more flexible setback approach which meets the 100' critical water quality setback at all locations, and at key locations the setback increases to approximately 400'. If this property were to redevelop in strict accordance to the existing primary setback regulations, the resulting open space would yield about 6 acres. The proposed green space, as indicated in Figure 6-2, is over 8 acres and leaves small parcels able to redevelop. Additional requirements for height stepbacks, effective permeable coverage, and design guidelines for building edges adjacent to the open space would be developed to ensure quality transitions from the built environment and the open space.

The advantages to the Physical Framework approach for developing new green space and utilizing open space are:

- Green space at the Statesman is 2 additional acres beyond the requirements of the Waterfront Overlay primary setback.
- Critical water quality setback is respected at all points.
- District framework balances green space along the water, expands connections to the neighborhood, and provides practical, place-specific development sites.

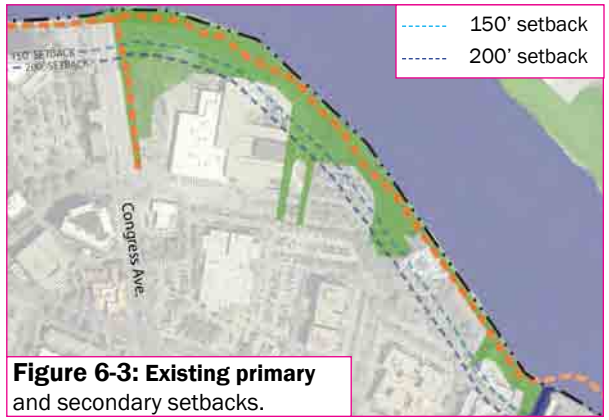


Figure 6-3: Existing primary and secondary setbacks.

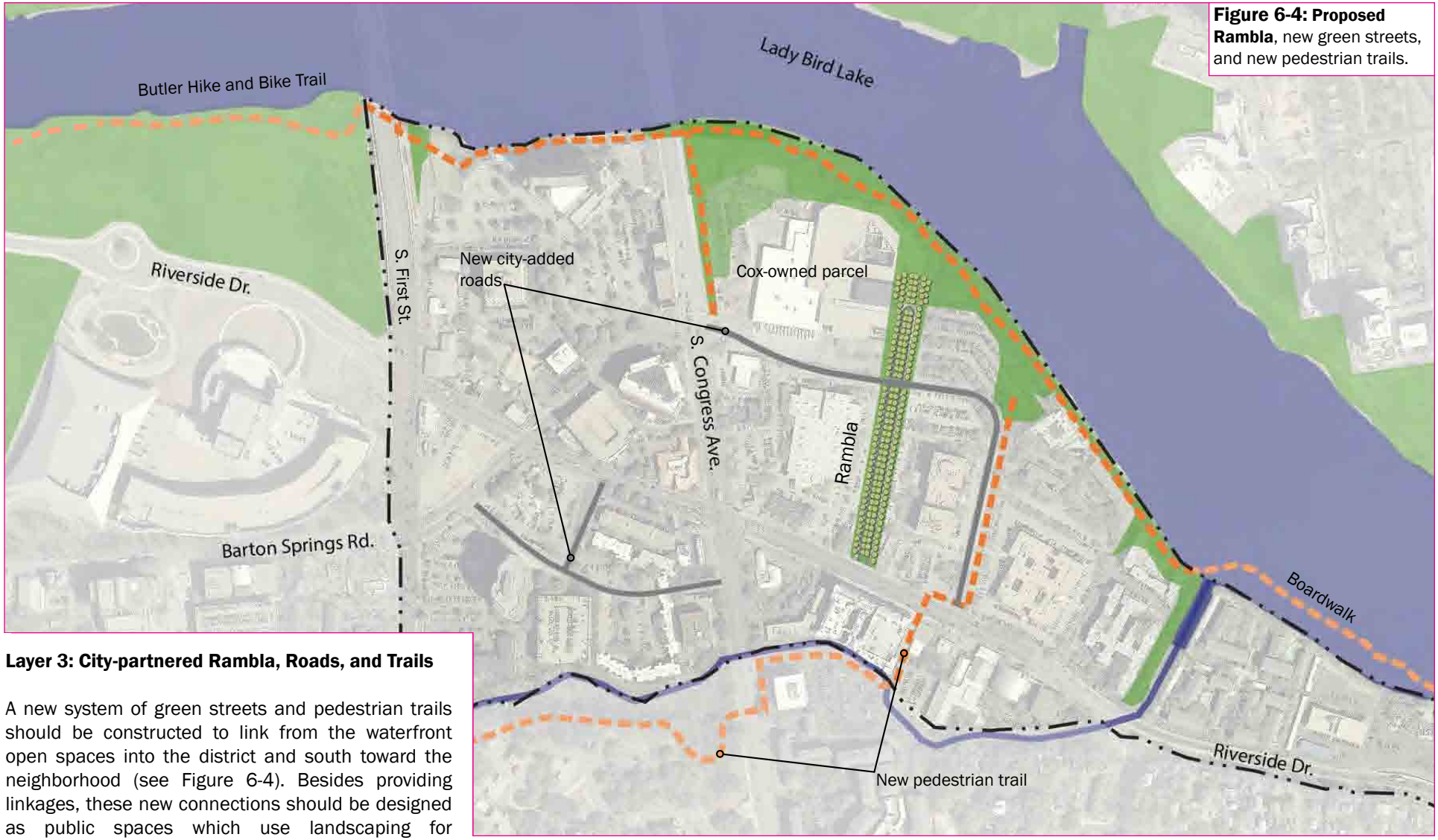


Figure 6-4: Proposed Rambla, new green streets, and new pedestrian trails.

Layer 3: City-partnered Rambla, Roads, and Trails

A new system of green streets and pedestrian trails should be constructed to link from the waterfront open spaces into the district and south toward the neighborhood (see Figure 6-4). Besides providing linkages, these new connections should be designed as public spaces which use landscaping for environmental services and beauty, and integrates public art to the infrastructure. One of the connecting streets, the Rambla, provides a central organizing element for the district, featuring a linear plaza that pulls the open space from the water up to Riverside Drive. The Rambla is primarily a linear park space which also accommodates vehicles into the new grid.

Other new streets will feature green infrastructure and streetscapes that are designed at a human scale.

In addition, new pedestrian/recreation trails are installed to provide neighborhood connectivity. One particular opportunity would be to connect the Bouldin neighborhood with a trail along the southern edge of Bouldin Creek from South First Street to South Congress Ave.

Figure 6-5: An example of a Rambla in Barcelona.

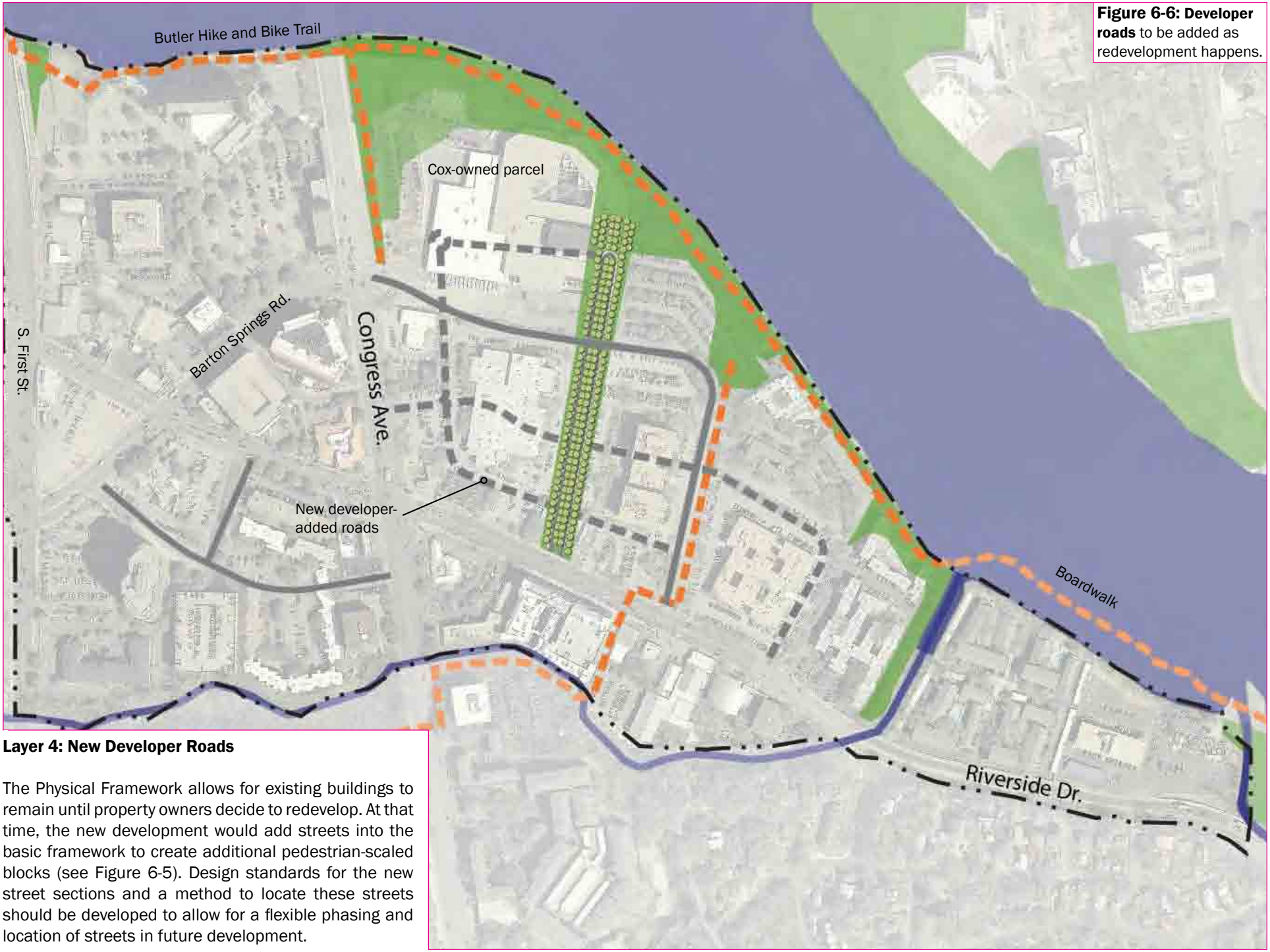


Figure 6-6: Developer roads to be added as redevelopment happens.

Layer 4: New Developer Roads

The Physical Framework allows for existing buildings to remain until property owners decide to redevelop. At that time, the new development would add streets into the basic framework to create additional pedestrian-scaled blocks (see Figure 6-5). Design standards for the new street sections and a method to locate these streets should be developed to allow for a flexible phasing and location of streets in future development.

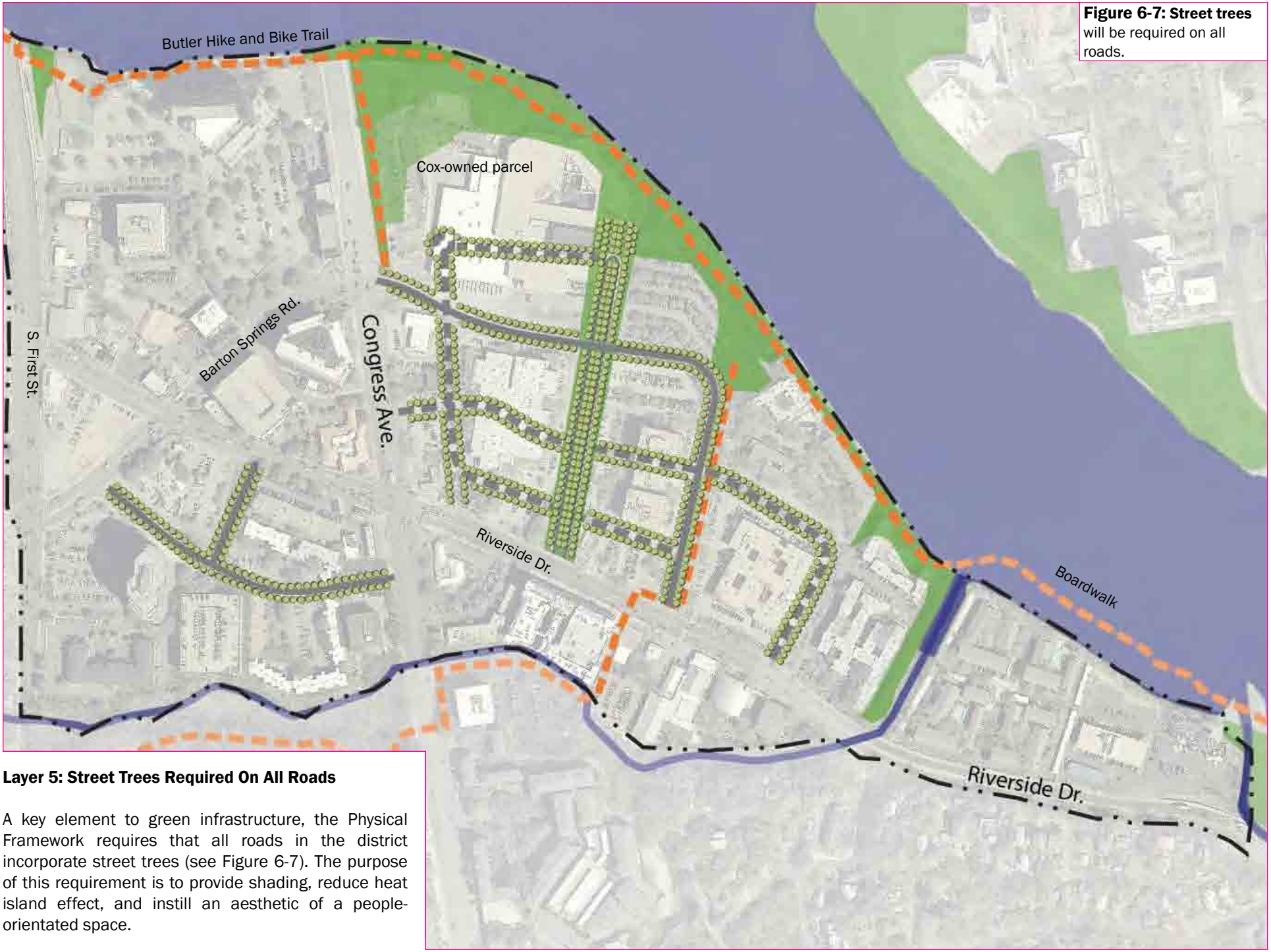


Figure 6-7: Street trees will be required on all roads.

Layer 5: Street Trees Required On All Roads

A key element to green infrastructure, the Physical Framework requires that all roads in the district incorporate street trees (see Figure 6-7). The purpose of this requirement is to provide shading, reduce heat island effect, and instill an aesthetic of a people-orientated space.

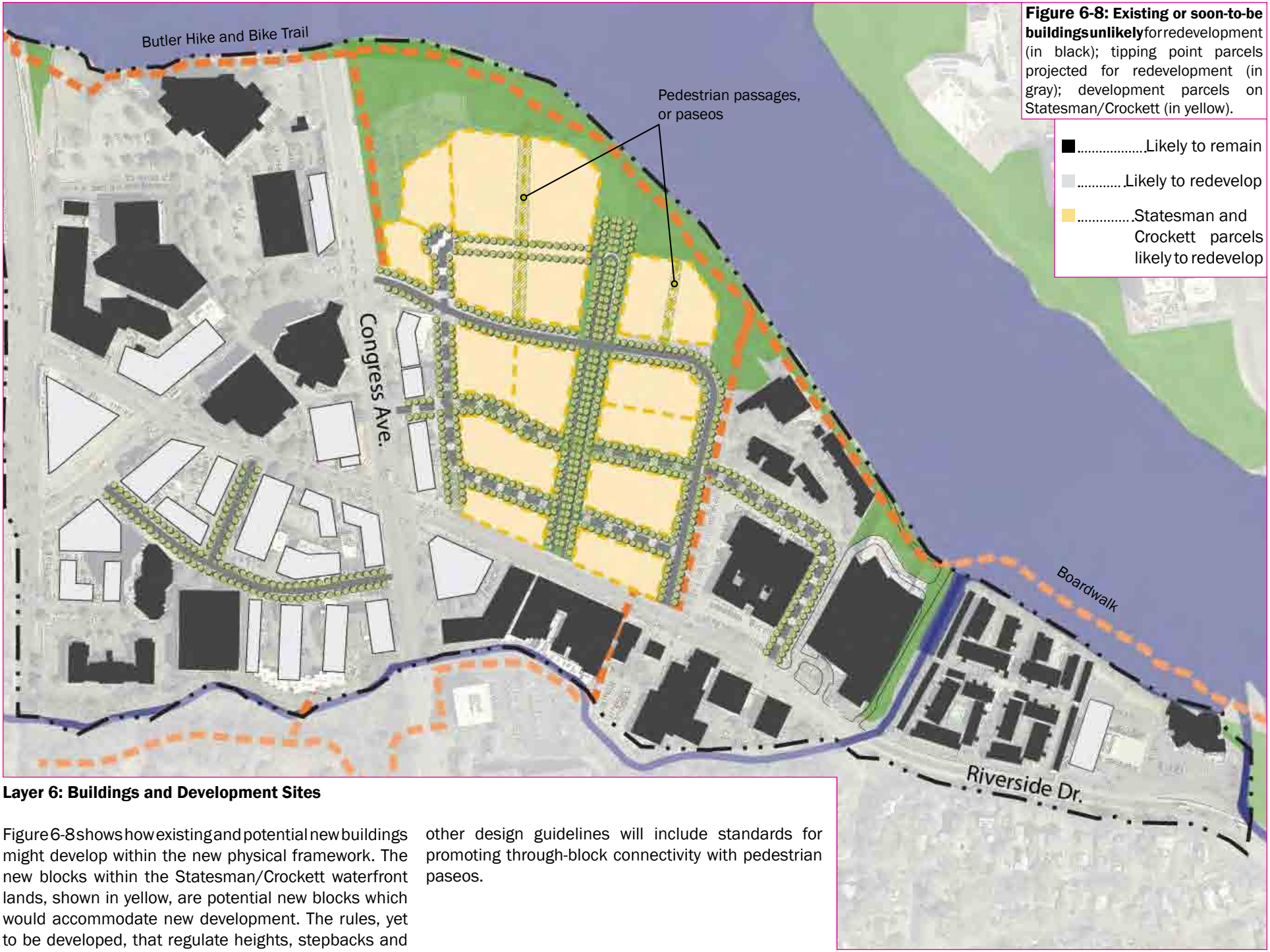


Figure 6-8: Existing or soon-to-be buildings unlikely for redevelopment (in black); tipping point parcels projected for redevelopment (in gray); development parcels on Statesman/Crockett (in yellow).

Layer 6: Buildings and Development Sites

Figure 6-8 shows how existing and potential new buildings might develop within the new physical framework. The new blocks within the Statesman/Crockett waterfront lands, shown in yellow, are potential new blocks which would accommodate new development. The rules, yet to be developed, that regulate heights, stepbacks and other design guidelines will include standards for promoting through-block connectivity with pedestrian paseos.

Figure 6-9: Pedestrian passageways between buildings within a block *(Vision for Harbourside Village MP; PWL Partnership).*

Developers would be required to include paseos (pedestrian passageways) between buildings within the block that exceed certain dimensions (see Figures 6-9 and 6-10). The location of the developer-added streets and passages would be determined with rules, to be developed, that allow for flexibility of sequencing of development and execution. The overall intent is to complement the basic physical framework to promote the connectivity, walkability, views and creation of public spaces.

Figure 6 -10: Paseo at Harbourside Village MP (PWL Partnership).

Figure 6-11: Where the proposed urban rail would run through the district.

Figure 6-12: The existing access road from Riverside Drive to the Statesman parking lot, along the eastern boundary of the Statesman site. This is the route of the potential urban rail from the lake to Riverside.

Layer 7: Urban Rail

The red dotted line in Figure 6-11 indicates the approximate bridge crossing for a potential urban rail, according to latest recommendations from Project Connect. The right-of-way for the proposed rail, from the bridge landing on the South Shore to Riverside Drive, is along the Statesman/Crockett eastern boundary along the access road (see Figure 6-12).

The red star, Figure 6-11, indicates the approximate location of the rail stop, between 50' – 300' from Riverside Drive. Once the urban rail reaches Riverside Drive, Project Connect has the rail turn east and run along Riverside Drive to Grove Boulevard.

Figure 6-13: The projected transformation of the access road (compare with Figure 6-12 on previous page).

As further planning unfolds for both the Project Connect urban rail and for the South Central Waterfront, close coordination will be required to provide synergies to further mutual goals. For this early stage of planning on both projects, this draft Physical Framework concerns itself with the potential placemaking opportunity of a rail stop in the SCW and with a strategy to allow for flexibility when a rail system might be constructed.

Figure 6-13 illustrates the potential transformation of the access road with green infrastructure, a recreation trail, and a green strip which reserves space for potential rail connection in the future.

Figure 6-14: A projected rail stop.

Figures 6-13 and 6-14 illustrate how the design of the new street/trail connection to the waterfront can elegantly accommodate a future rail stop.

Figure 6-15: The super-block which contains the city office building at One Texas Center.

Much of the attention throughout the South Central Waterfront planning process over the years has focused on the Statesman site and the adjacent properties to the south, and understandably so. How these properties redevelop and whether they do so with the needed physical framework of green spaces, street and pedestrian connections, and green methodologies will largely determine the future of the whole SCW area.

However, many of the emerging ideas from the recent SCW planning have put attention to another important superblock which will present a significant opportunity to shape the future of the area, the block which includes the only City-owned property in the SCW, the One Texas Center building.

The Physical Framework provides a new connecting street that bisects the block, from South Congress Street to Barton Springs Road, and connecting to Haywood Street which currently leads to the parking garage at One Texas Center (see Figure 6-15). This new connection sets up a physical framework to guide more orderly redevelopment of the block with the potential to mix office, retail and housing uses across the block in a more integrated and fine-grained fashion.

This block, which is defined on the southern edge by Bouldin Creek, is neighbor to the Texas School for the Deaf (TSD), a State of Texas property. One emerging idea is to create a pedestrian/recreation trail along the southern edge of Bouldin Creek on the TSD property (see Figure 6-16). This trail segment would provide an important pedestrian connection for the Bouldin neighborhood from South First Street over to South Congress Avenue. This trail connector could also provide an attractive, well used and safe southern edge to the TSD campus.

In Figure 6 -15 the yellow dashed line represents the City/ Crockett super-block, which includes a new connector street to set up a more rational grid work for redevelopment. The red circle on the Texas School for the Deaf property shows the location adjacent to Bouldin Creek with the proposed new trail connector (see Figure 6-16 on opposite page).

Figure 6-16: The proposed new trail along the southern edge of Bouldin Creek as it borders the Texas School for the Deaf. Across the creek is a potential new housing development.

Financial Framework

7

The second requirement for guiding the future of the SCW in a positive direction is: **A Financial Framework** to capture the district-wide value of investments, both private and public, to realize the Physical Framework, and to include the creation of affordable housing.

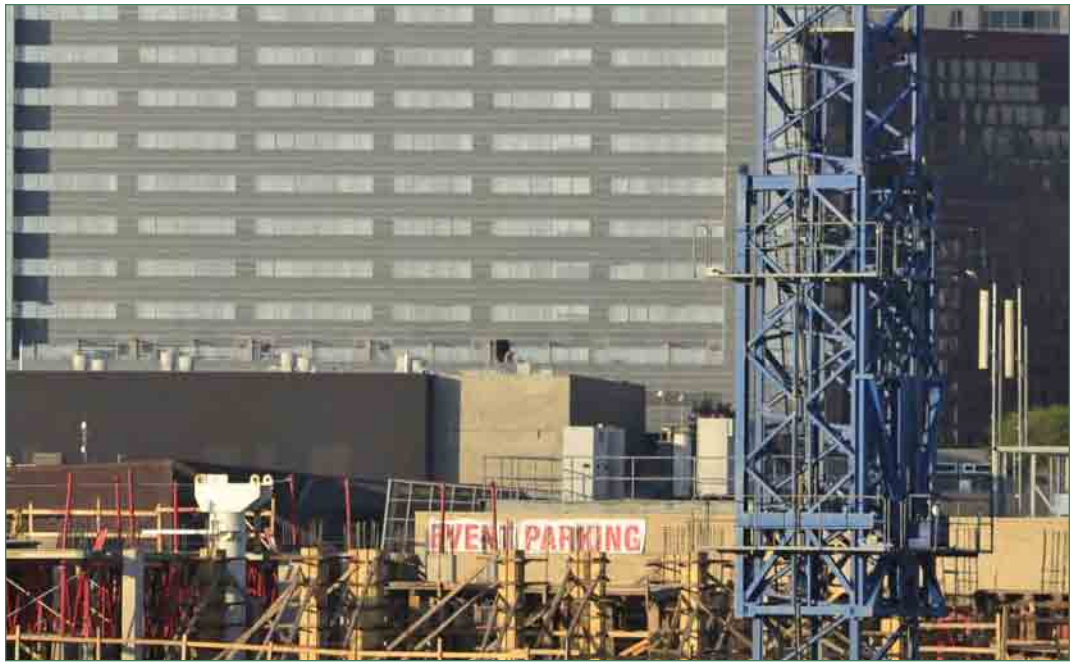
Financial Framework

Innovative financing strategies and city/regional/federal collaborations and partnerships with property owners will be required to pay for the physical elements of the public green infrastructure that are envisioned in the draft Physical Framework. Fortunately, the SCW has tremendous assets to bring to bear.

Preliminary analysis provided by the Sustainable Places Project Report indicates that a least $1.2 billion in private investment is heading to the SCW, even if the City does no planning. The Report then goes on to emphasize that with a coordinated plan to incentivize desirable development to contribute to the district's value, private investment could be valued at $1.8 billion over the next 20 years, yielding $21 million in annual property taxes.

Likewise, city/regional/federal investments for on-going and potential strategic capital improvements and potential investments in an urban rail system could bring significant funding into the district. It will require planning and design at a finer level of detail than has taken place so far to indicate exactly how this projected influx in private investments can be leveraged with city/state/federal funds to finance the essential physical infrastructure and help fund the affordable housing called for in the SCW vision. Nonetheless, the opportunity is clear, and there are instructive examples from other cities which model how, in similar situations, public/private partnerships financed and realized a vision plan.

Figures 7-1A, 7-1B: There are currently 4 properties redeveloping in the South Waterfront District.



Layer 1: Similarities with the Portland Central Waterfront

Economic Development specialist Abe Farkas, from Portland, Oregon, who was a speaker/panelist at the March Waterfront Talkabout on financing strategies and provided expert assistance in April over the course of the five-day SCW Vision + Design Intensive. He provided a particularly instructive case study with the Central Waterfront project in Portland, Oregon.

Many similarities existed between Austin's and the Portland Central Waterfront of Portland, Oregon, before redevelopment. These similarities make the Portland Central Waterfront an important case study to examine in developing the Financial Framework for Austin's South Central Waterfront.

The following are the most salient of these similarities:

- Size:
  120 acres for Portland;
  97 acres for Austin.
- Number of private property owners:
  34 in Portland (see Figure 7-2);
  31 in Austin (see Figure 7-3).
- Street structure—Lacking a good structure of streets and blocks.
- Connectivity—Suffering from poor connectivity to the surrounding community.

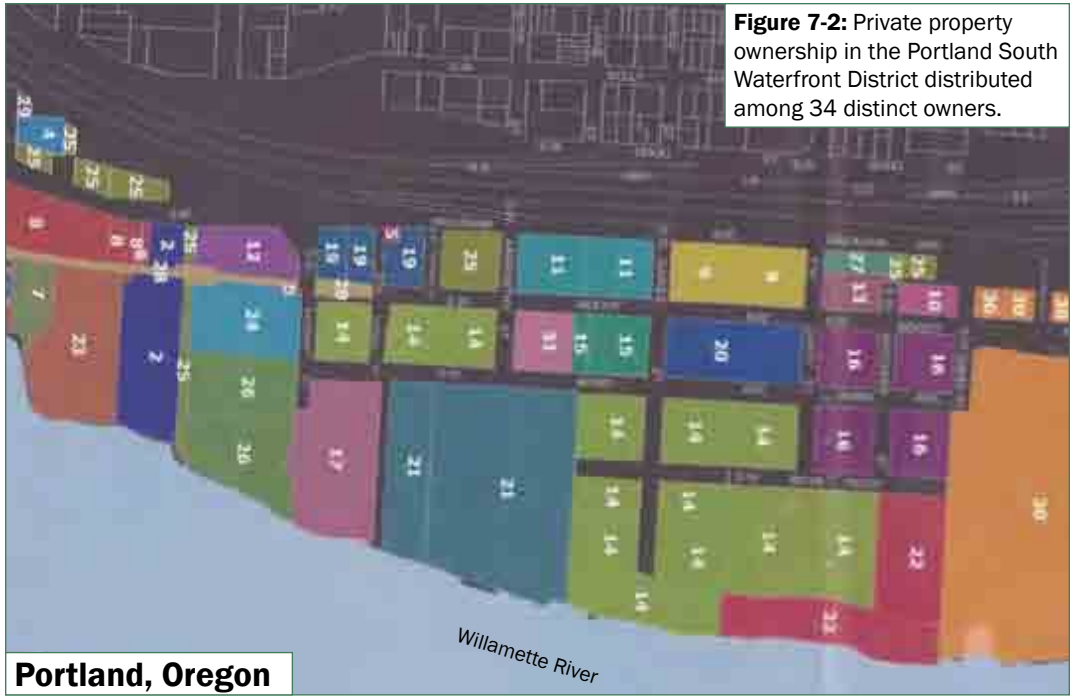


Figure 7-2: Private property ownership in the Portland South Waterfront District distributed among 34 distinct owners.

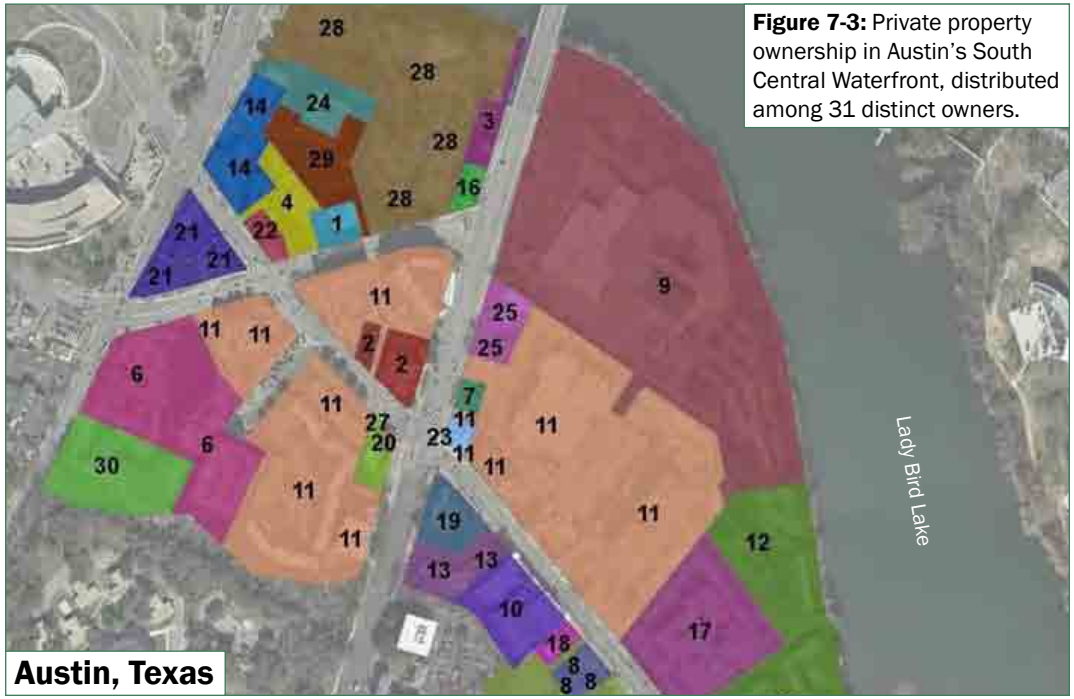


Figure 7-3: Private property ownership in Austin's South Central Waterfront, distributed among 31 distinct owners.

Layer 2: Public Investment is Key

In Portland, Oregon, years of planning created a plan which envisioned better street connections, transit-oriented development and expansion of open space. In addition, Portland also implemented new zoning regulations to allow development to proceed according to the vision. However, Portland found that planning was not enough; zoning was not enough. Nothing happened on the ground for the redevelopment of the Portland Central Waterfront until the City of Portland stepped in with commitments totaling over $100 million.

These financial commitments funded and built key physical infrastructure components of the plan (see Figure 7-4), such as key streets, property acquisition for a public green, a tram stop to connect the district to a major employment center, and an affordable housing fund. This public investment by the City of Portland, Oregon provided enough certainty for a critical mass of private property owners to pledge over $1 Billion in redevelopment investments over the short term to build their complementary development in accords to the agreed urban design framework.

Figure 7-4: The City of Portland created a physical framework that established a grid system, helping reconnect the neighborhoods to the waterfront.

Figure 7-5: Portland South Waterfront District today.

Key Components of the Development Agreement between the City of Portland and private property owners in Portland, Oregon:

- $1+ Billion Private Investment ($3B over 20 years). $100+M Public Investment (key streets; tram & streetcar; park; affordable housing).
- 2,000 Market-Rate Housing Units; 400 affordable units.
- Neighborhood Infrastructure: greenway, parks, pedestrian bridge, aerial tram, streetcar, room for light rail (See Figures 7-6, 7-7, and 7-8).
- Sustainable Buildings and Environment.

Layer 3: The Public Return on Investment

Drilling down a little deeper, the development agreement included sharing the commitments, risks and the benefits, and involved open communication with all parties and the public. From the public's side, the ledger looked like this:

Public committed:

- Investment in infrastructure
- Revised zoning district
- Park site acquisition
- Urban renewal financial risk
- Political support
- Staffing resources

Public received:

- District "Jump start"
- Open space and greenway commitments
- Affordable housing and jobs creation
- Better formed development
- Minority/Women/Small business and work force equity programs
- LEED building commitments
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) generation
- "Gap Payment" obligation
- Infrastructure cost-sharing
- First right of refusal

Acquiring land for the Central Square (see Figure 7-7) for the Portland South Waterfront was a key component in gaining support and agreement to the framework plan. This land was bought with public funds.

The City of Portland's investment in the aerial tram connector (see Figure 6-8) to the main campus of Oregon Health & Science University, a major employer in Portland, prompted several property owners in the Portland South Waterfront to form a horizontal development entity. This group of private property owners brought enough territory to the table to collectively enter into the development agreement with the City.

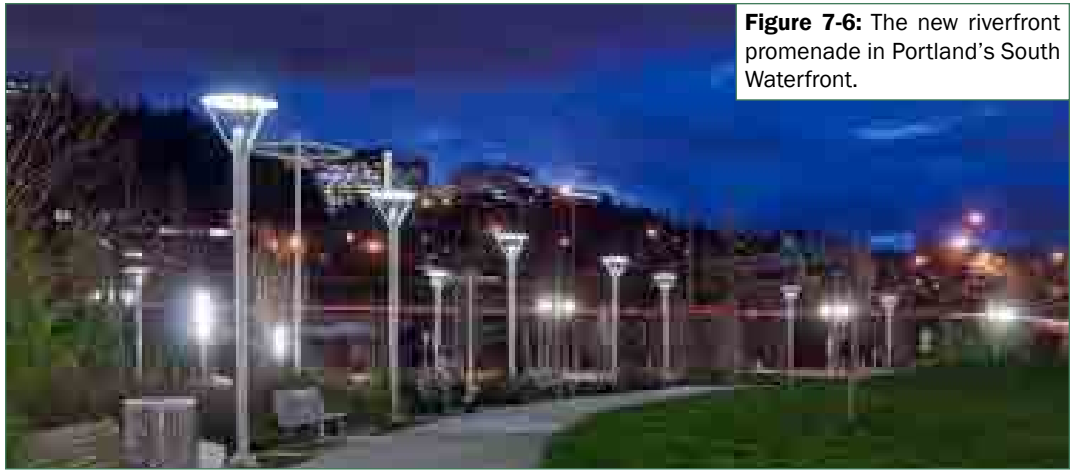


Figure 7-6: The new riverfront promenade in Portland's South Waterfront.

Figure 7-7: The Central Square in the South Waterfront in Portland, Oregon.

Figure 7-8: The aerial tram connection from OHSU's main campus to its South Waterfront campus in Portland, Oregon.

Layer 4: The Private Return on Investment

From the Private side, the ledger looked like this:

Private Commitment:

- Investment in infrastructure
- Investment in development by date certain
- More public amenities than code required
- LEED buildings
- Land for affordable housing reserved
- Cover TIF risk

Private Received:

- Policy/political support
- Amenities for private investment
- Infrastructure funding certainty (amount and timing)
- Increased return on investment

Affordable housing and family housing was designed into the Portland South Waterfront as an integral part of the urban framework of pedestrian passages and public square and ready access to public transit (See Figure 7-9).

Rain gardens are part of the housing development, providing a landscaped transition between the public realm and private spaces, and providing a green approach for capturing and treating stormwater (See Figure 7-10).

Figure 7-9: Affordable and family housing in the South Waterfront in Portland, Oregon.

Figure 7-10: Rain gardens in the South Waterfront in Portland, Oregon.

Layer 5: Silver Buckshot, Not a Single Silver Bullet

Abe Farkas emphasized that in the Portland example, and with similar projects elsewhere, there is no "silver bullet" to solving the financing issues. Instead these plans use more of a "silver buckshot" approach, requiring a jigsaw puzzle or quiltwork of financial strategies, that works both for the district as a whole and for each part of that whole.

Possible Financial Tools:

Based on the experience of Portland, Oregon, the following are possible mechanisms that should be explored as part of Austin's potential financial toolkit for the SCW:

- Tax Increment Financing (for loans, site acquisition, infrastructure, affordable housing)
- Land Banking
- Transportation Funds (state/federal)
- Parking Fees
- Public Improvement District
- Tax Credits (Housing, Historic, New Markets Tax Credit [NMTC], Energy)
- Tax Abatements (market and affordable housing)
- Development Bonuses
- Transfer of Development Rights
- Public land monetization
- Sole Source Impact Fees

Figure 7-11: Austin's South Central Waterfront c. 1951.

Figure 7-12: Austin's South Central Waterfront c. 1977.

Figure 7-13: Austin's South Central Waterfront today.

City as an Active Partner

8

The third requirement for guiding the future of the SCW in a positive direction is: **An Active Partner Framework** that has the City of Austin as a proactive stakeholder making strategic capital investments in order to help bring about the public/private partnerships required to achieve the Physical and Financial Framework goals.

City as an Active Partner

Layer 1: The Objectives of Public Investment

As demonstrated in the case studies of redevelopment of the Portland South Waterfront, investment by the City of Portland proved critical for realizing public objectives that otherwise would not occur. These points are covered in the section on the Financial Framework.

The primary objective of public funding in redevelopment is to obtain a return on investment that exceeds what would be expected without this public funding. This holds true in the case of the redevelopment of Austin's South Central Waterfront. Under this general purpose, public investment in redevelopment in the SCW also serves a series of more specific objectives.

These specific objectives include the following:

- Development of public amenities. These amenities range from parks and open space to pedestrian-scale streetscapes to improved district-wide connectivity.
- A greater mix of housing affordable to the full range of incomes.
- More efficient, less expensive use of infrastructure. This is particularly true for transportation investment by encouraging people to live and work in the same district.
- Creation of neighborhoods reflecting the full range of activities and values of the entire city.

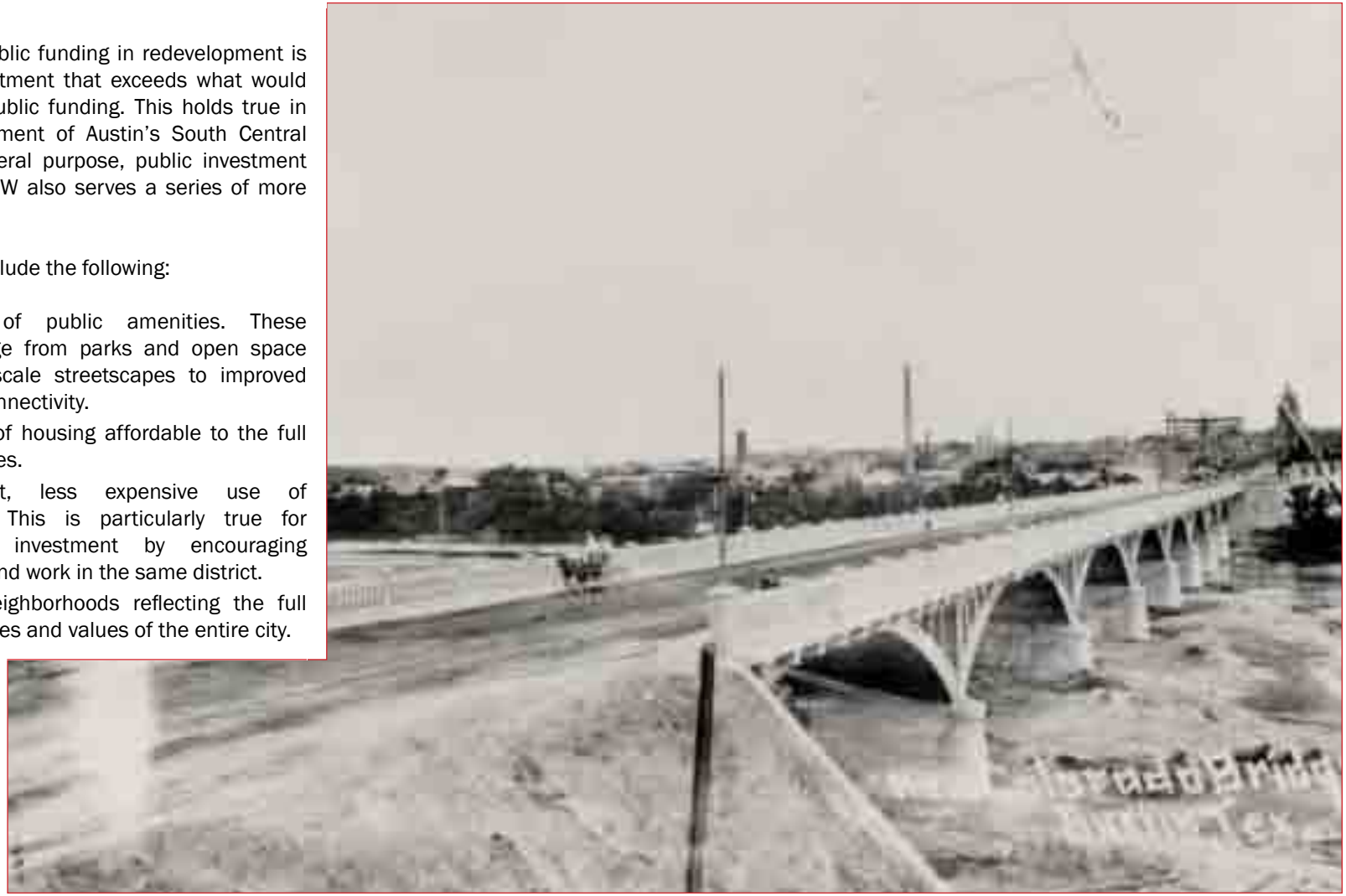


Figure 8-1: In 1910, the City of Austin invested $209,000, the equivalent of tens of millions of dollars today, in an iconic link between downtown and the South Central Waterfront.

Layer 2: A Partnership Toolkit

One key lesson from the case study of the Portland South Waterfront is that the City of Portland had to be an active participant with financial commitments, sharing risks and creating partnerships in order to make things happen. Additionally, joint property owners worked with each other to form partnerships for negotiating the collective private commitments to the development framework. As with the approach to financing, there is no single strategy for forming public/private partnerships to address all the needs of a district. Rather, as clearly demonstrated in Portland, Oregon, a multi-layered approach is needed to find success.

The range of partnership models used in Portland, Oregon, that might serve Austin's South Central Waterfront, include various approaches that could be thought of as a toolkit for enabling partnerships among public and private entities in the SCW.

These partnership models include:

- Development Agreements
- Horizontal Development Entity
- Public Improvement Districts
- Tax Increment Financing
- Tax Credits (Low Income Housing; New Markets; Energy)
- HUD Section 108
- Land Banking
- Land Swaps
- Transfer of Development Rights

Figure 8-2A: Lady Bird Johnson

Figure 8-2B-C: Civic leadership and vision in Austin's past led to the creation of public/private partnerships and civic investments that realized community assets like the Ann and Roy Butler Trail.

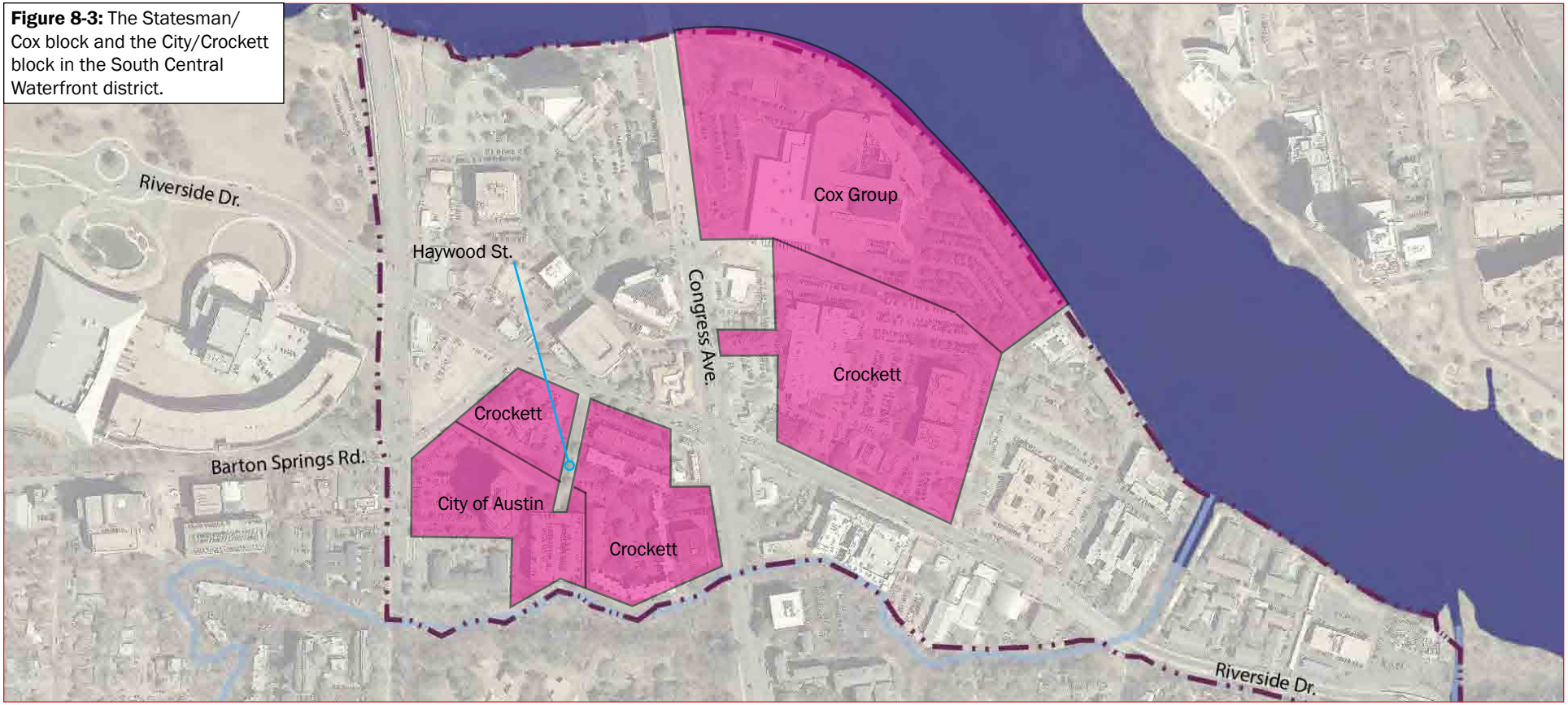


Figure 8-3: The Statesman/Cox block and the City/Crockett block in the South Central Waterfront district.

Layer 3: Two blocks of opportunity

Austin's South Central Waterfront is comprised of 31 private property owners and one City owned parcel. This presents inherent challenges for coordinating between so many players. Portland negotiated successful implementation of a district plan with 34 property owners, so that fact alone is heartening. More significant is that Austin begins with a potentially more advantageous position than Portland did. In Austin, the most significant properties, in terms of area covered, imminence of potential redevelopment, location and proximity, and potential impact to the future of the SCW, fall in two blocks. These two blocks involve, for the most part, only three property owners, with the City of Austin as one of them (See Figure 8-3).

These two blocks will largely drive both the physical and fiscal aspects of the overall SCW redevelopment. For the purposes of this Active Partner Framework, these two blocks can be characterized as follows:

- Statesman/Cox (18 acres) and Crockett (12 acres). This is the only block which can provide significant new opportunity for open space along the waterfront and new connections from the neighborhood/ Riverside Drive to the waterfront.

- The City of Austin (5 acres) and Crockett (6 acres). Two other parcels in this block include the Extended Stay America Hotel (2.5 acres) and the Chevron station (.5 acres).

The block of opportunity that is represented by the Statesman site and adjacent Crockett land has captured lots of attention throughout the recent planning processes dating back to the 2000 ROMA Study, and rightly so. The SCW draft Physical Framework, presented in this report, is no exception, and it highlights the positive impact that the expansion of open spaces along the waterfront with a complementary network of new green streets, new pedestrian trails and a potential urban rail connection through this area could have on the future of the whole SCW district.

A new opportunity that the SCW draft Vision Framework adds to the equation is the significant prospect also presented with the block (the OTC block) which contains the city owned property at One Texas Center. The OTC block also offers the potential to add to the overall connectivity and walkability of the whole SCW district by providing an important cross-block street connector that links with Haywood Street, which currently leads from Riverside Drive to the parking garage at One Texas Center. A potential trail connection along the southern edge of Bouldin Creek, between South First Street and South Congress Avenue, would further break up this superblock and increase walkability for the district and adjacent neighborhoods.

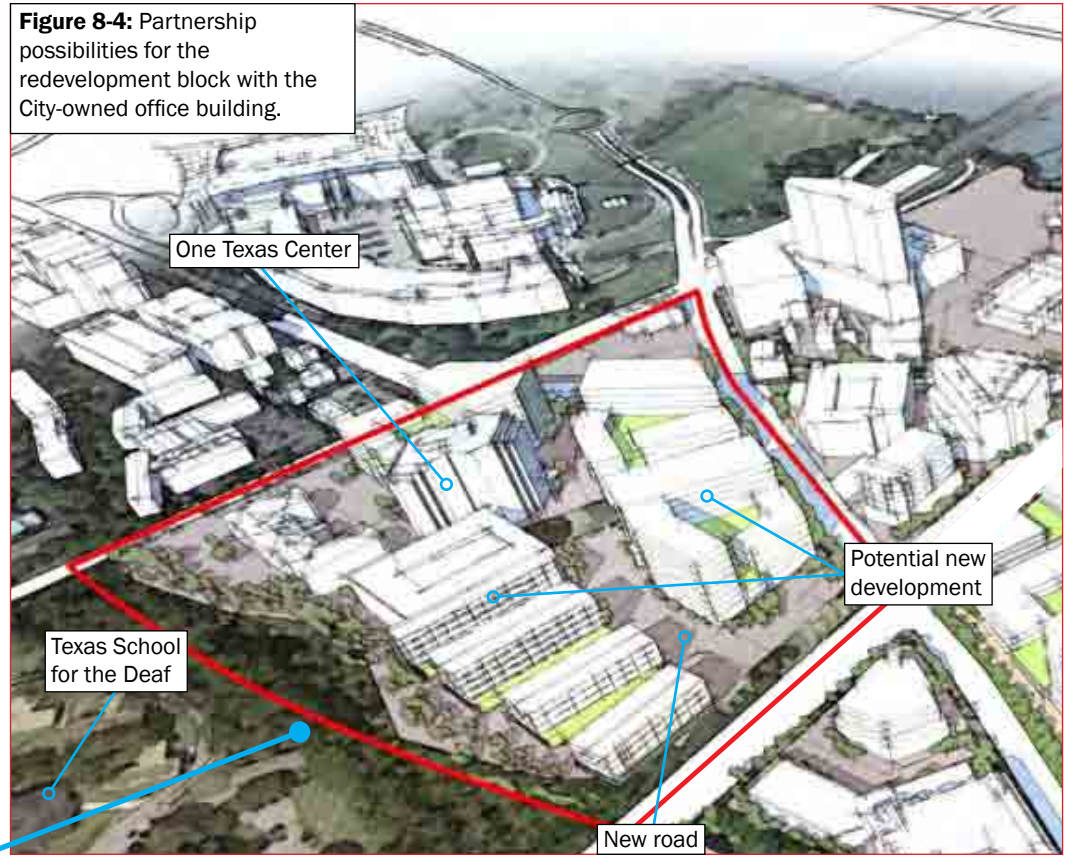


Figure 8-4: Partnership possibilities for the redevelopment block with the City-owned office building.

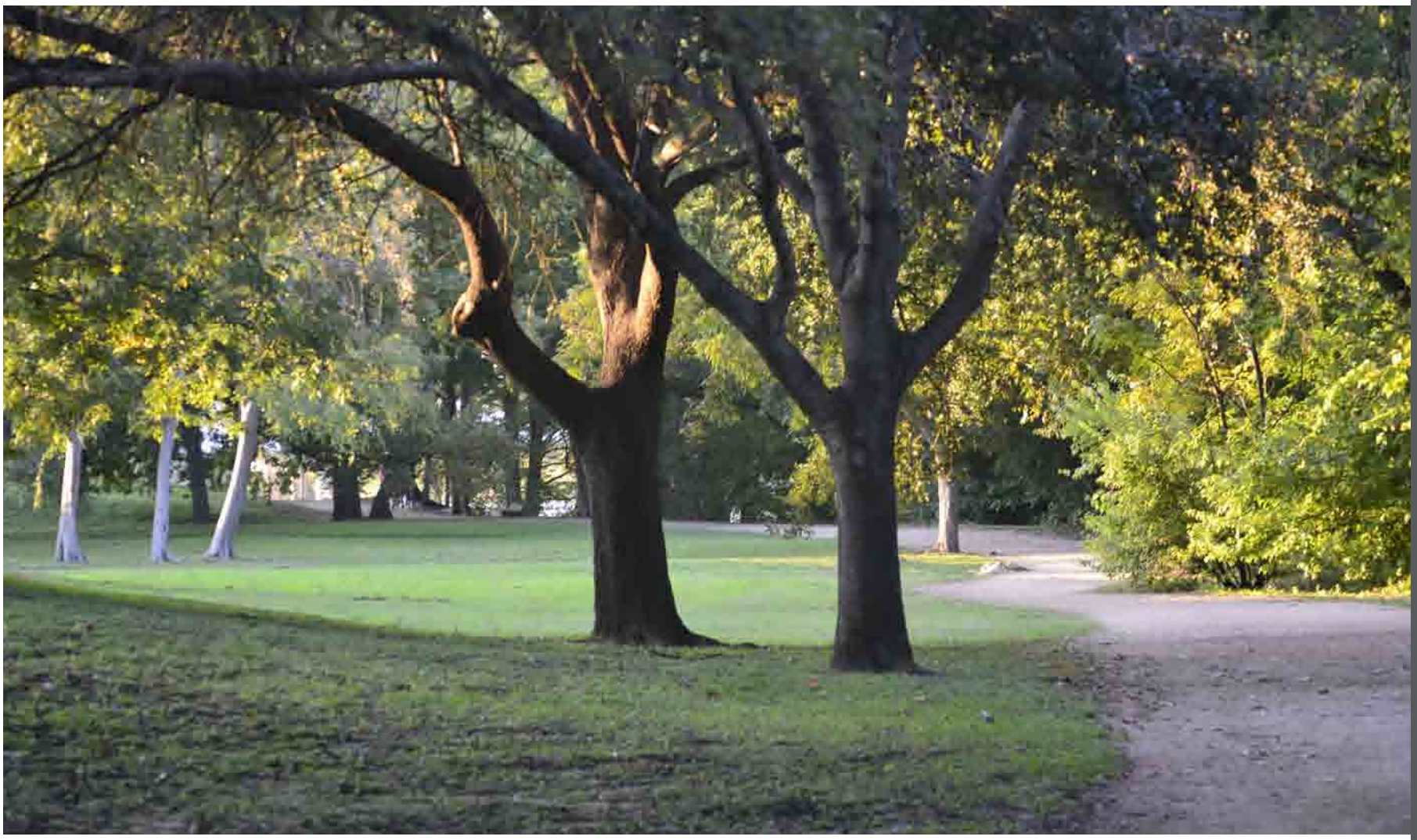
The OTC block also offers the City a unique opportunity to explore a partnership with the largest adjacent property owner (Crockett) in order to redevelop with housing, retail and office uses distributed more evenly across the block in a fine-grained and integrated fashion.

Additionally, this block could provide significant opportunities to provide more affordable housing options than are likely feasible for properties closer and adjacent to the waterfront, which have significant costs associated with providing other community benefits like waterfront access.

Figure 8-5: Sketch of a potential trail connection on the southern edge of Bouldin Creek between South First Street and South Congress Avenue. Potential new housing development is illustrated across the creek in the block occupied by the One Texas Center property.

Next Steps

9



The SCW Interim Draft Vision Framework presented in this report is built upon a foundation of past planning, best practices, expert advice and vigorous public engagement. Building on the momentum of efforts already underway and the strategic engagement of consultant assistance will ensure a successful development and delivery of an implementable SCW Small Area Plan.

Step 1: Build on the Engagement

The work accomplished so far has been possible because of the active engagement and participation of key community groups, property owners, and other stakeholders. Moving forward requires that all the stakeholders build on the momentum underway. The active involvement of the following stakeholder partnerships will be indispensable for the success of the SCW Initiative:

- **The Waterfront Planning Advisory Board**

  With the City Council's support, the WPAB has been able to schedule special-called meetings as often as required in 2014 to participate in the SCW Initiative. Staff will continue to meet with the WPAB, as required, to continue the Board's active involvement.

- **The WPAB-appointed Stakeholder Outreach Committee**

  The 13 member Stakeholder Outreach Committee includes a core of WPAB members along with representatives from key property owners, the Texas School for the Deaf, adjacent neighborhoods representatives, an affordable housing leader, realtor, business owner, and other stakeholders. The Stakeholder Outreach Committee should be expanded, as needed and on the consent of the WPAB, to ensure broad outreach to keep the public informed and involved.

- **The general public**

  Over 600 individuals from the public participated in the SCW public events in 2014 alone. Ongoing public engagement will be required to develop a final SCW Small Area Plan and Framework Implementation Plan that address the range of community values and which has community support.

Step 2: Coordinate and Expand the City's Multi-Department Effort

The SCW Initiative has organized a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) which includes staff from seven departments of the City of Austin. Many more staff and departments have participated in planning events and helped with the SCW Initiative. Moving forward, the TAG can bring expertise to specific elements that will be part of a fully realized SCW Small Area Plan and Framework Implementation Plan. Specifically, this planning should incorporate the active participation of the following departments and specialty areas:

- **Economic Development**

  Continue to consult on potential public/private partnership models and on refining the draft SCW Financial Framework.

- **Watershed Protection**

  Continue to consult on green infrastructure technologies and methodologies for integrating a district-wide system into the draft SCW Physical Framework.

- **Capital Planning Office**

  Continue to consult on how the emerging capital planning needs and costs associated with the SCW Physical Framework, as they are better defined, can be integrated into the city's long range capital improvement program.

- **Transportation**

  Continue to consult on transportation issues, particularly to coordinate with a potential urban rail in the SCW, to study how to implement the Complete Streets policy with streets/streetscape for the proposed and existing streets, and to consult and coordinate on potential bicycle and pedestrian connections.

- **Public Works**

  Continue to consult and coordinate on potential trail connections for bicyclists and pedestrians, and continue to coordinate with the Congress Street streetscape project as it impacts the SCW.

- **Art in Public Places Program (in Economic Development)**

  Build upon the work begun at the public artist roundtable, which was a component of the SCW Vision + Design Intensive, to integrate a public arts component into the SCW Physical Framework.

- **Resource Recovery**

  Build upon the successful EPA-funded Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for the SCW and continue to consult on addressing potential brownfield issues and opportunities.

Step 3: Synergize with Agencies and Projects Working on Ventures Impacting the SCW

The SCW Small Area Plan and Framework Implementation Plan will require coordination and integration with other initiatives and agencies which impact the area. Some of the key initiatives and agencies to be engaged moving forward include:

- **Project Connect**

  Pending emerging recommendations and direction of Project Connect, the SCW Initiative needs to coordinate with agencies involved in urban rail to integrate it into the SCW Physical Framework, and make a potential rail stop in the SCW a placemaking enhancement for the entire district.

- **Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA)**

  To ensure that the SCW portion of the Congress Avenue streetscape becomes a gateway experience leading into downtown and the State Capitol, the SCW Initiative needs to continue coordination with Downtown Austin Alliance and city staff involved in the Congress Avenue Streetscape project, being led by the DAA.

- **Waller Creek Conservancy**

  The SCW Initiative needs to coordinate with the Waller Creek Conservancy to create complementary designs for the waterfront open space on the south shore that may include the Waller Creek vision for a connecting pontoon bridge.

Step 4: Engage Professional Consultant Services

The SCW Initiative, to date, has leveraged grants, pro bono services, volunteer efforts, public service programs, university architecture and planning programs, and City of Austin staff resources to create the draft vision framework plan. These efforts have set the stage for the work ahead. The City Council resolution from August 2013 noted that targeted consultant services, pending funding, could help create a more robust and implementable plan. Indeed, at this juncture in moving the vision of the South Central Waterfront forward, engaging these professional consultant services is an indispensable next step.

Pending funding authorization, consultant services would contribute to the development of the SCW Small Area Plan and Framework Implementation Plan in the following areas:

- **Economics and Finance**
  Professional consultants are needed to refine development and finance models, return on investement (ROI) studies, market analysis, and density bonus calibrations.

- **Engineering**
  Professional consultants are needed to help produce the preliminary design and cost estimates for an integrated green infrastructure network.

- **Design and planning**
  Professional consultants are needed to complement the City's planning effort on the Physical Framework; including, elements of transportation, landscape, urban design, and public art.

- **Management**
  Professional consultants are needed to recommend district-wide management and implementation models.