

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2013-0003

HLC DATE:

May 20, 2013

PC DATE:

APPLICANT: Southwest Strategies Group, owner

HISTORIC NAME: Seaholm Power Plant

WATERSHED: Lady Bird Lake

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 800 W. Cesar Chavez Street

ZONING FROM: DMU-CURE-CO to DMU-CURE-CO-H

SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from downtown mixed use, central urban redevelopment, conditional overlay (DMU-CURE-CO) combining district zoning to downtown mixed use, central urban redevelopment, conditional overlay – Historic Landmark (DMU-CURE-CO-H) combining district zoning.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION: The Seaholm Power Plant is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark and an icon in the City. It qualifies as a historic landmark because of its State designation, and its significance in the areas of architecture, historical associations, and community value.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION:

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The power plant does not appear in any City survey due to its age.

CITY COUNCIL DATE:

ACTION:

ORDINANCE READINGS: 1ST 2ND 3RD

ORDINANCE NUMBER:

CASE MANAGER: Steve Sadowsky

PHONE: 974-6454

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

Architecture: See attached National Register nomination form.

Historical Associations: See attached National Register nomination form.

PARCEL NO.: 01050009030000

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Lot 1, Seaholm Subdivision

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT: Not applicable

APPRAISED VALUE: Not applicable – City –owned.

PRESENT USE: Vacant, but slated for redevelopment.

CONDITION: Excellent

PRESENT OWNERS: City of Austin

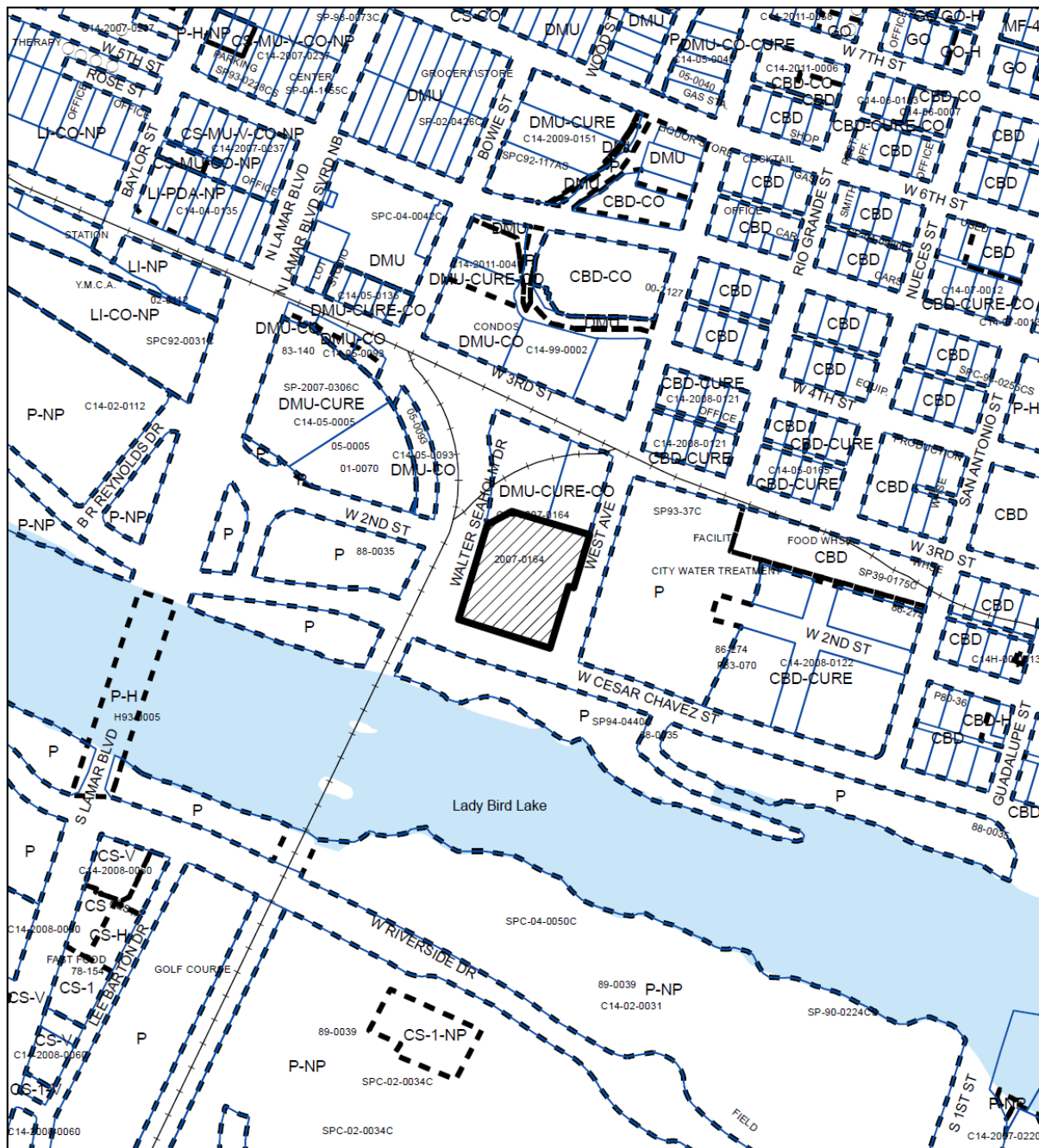
DATE BUILT: ca. 1955

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: Some, but many are proposed for removal and restoration of original historic finishes pursuant to a Certificate of Appropriateness.




ORIGINAL OWNER(S): City of Austin

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: None.

LOCATION MAP



1" = 400'

-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

HISTORIC ZONING

ZONING CASE#: C14H-2013-0003

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



Seaholm Power Plant

This complex is an industrial and architectural landmark in Austin. Electric power arrived in the Texas capital in 1895, after the Colorado River was first dammed to generate electricity. The city of Austin has owned its own generation and distribution system ever since, a rarity among large cities.

A growing population and post-World War II demand for new appliances and air conditioning increased the need for electricity. In 1948, the city of Austin commissioned a new power generation plant to be built here, just west of the existing site. Designed by the nationally known Kansas City engineering firm of Burns & McDonnell, the complex developed in two phases in 1950 and 1955. The massive plant included a generator building, which initially housed two Hydrogen-cooled turbine generators but was designed to expand to five as demand increased; outdoor boilers; an oil heating plant; a demineralization building; and a water intake structure. The buildings reflect the Art Moderne style, with site-cast structural concrete, scored concrete panel cladding, metal divided-light windows and glass blocks. The turbine generator building includes distinctive illuminated Moderne graphics in its signage. The buildings are solid concrete construction, although other power plants built by Burns & McDonnell up to that time had utilized structural steel.

On June 2, 1960, the city of Austin posthumously dedicated “Power Plant No. 2” to Walter E. Seaholm (1897-1956), who served the city of Austin for 35 years, including stints as City Manager and Director of Utilities. Seaholm Power Plant remained an active part of the city’s power generation system until 1989.

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark – 2007

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Seaholm Plant
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 800 West Cesar Chavez Street

CITY OR TOWN: Austin

STATE: Texas

CODE: TX

COUNTY: Travis

CODE: 453

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

VICINITY: N/A

ZIP CODE: 78703

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain):

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
Property Name, City, County, Texas

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5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Public-local

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Structure

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	0	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	3	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	3	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION: energy facility

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS CONCRETE
ROOF CONCRETE/ASPHALT
OTHER METAL: aluminum, GLASS BLOCK, GLASS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-20).

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 Property Name, City, County, Texas

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- ☐ **A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- ☐ **B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- ☒ **C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- ☐ **D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ENGINEERING

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1950-1955

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1950, 1955

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Burns & McDonnell (engineer)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-21 through 8-30).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-31 through 9-33).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
Property Name, City, County, Texas

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: 8.3 acres

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	620040	3348780

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Lots 1-8, Original City Block 186, Lots 1-8, Original City Block 187, and 3.16 acres of Raymonds Plateau, Austin, Travis County, Texas.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION The boundaries include all lots historically associated with the structures.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Sasha Berghausen

ORGANIZATION: The University of Texas at Austin,
School of Architecture

DATE: May 2000

STREET & NUMBER: 809 East 31st Street

TELEPHONE: (512) 478-1134

CITY OR TOWN: Austin

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 78705

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet 7-6)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see photos)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Austin Energy, City of Austin (Contact=Rose San Miguel, Project Manager, Technical Support Services)

STREET & NUMBER: 721 Barton Springs Road

TELEPHONE: 512/322-6218

CITY OR TOWN: Austin

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 78704

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Seaholm Plant
Austin, Travis County, Texas

Summary

Seaholm Plant, a city-owned power generation plant built of site-cast concrete in two phases in 1950 and 1955, sits on the north bank of Austin's Town Lake on the western edge of downtown. All three contributing buildings on the site—the Turbine Generator Building, the Water Intake Structure, and the Oil Heating Plant—have rectangular floor plans and massing. Each building is decorated in Art Deco style and the Turbine Generator Building is adorned with signs written in a Moderne font. Few changes have been made to any of the buildings and they retain a high degree of integrity in their location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

The Turbine Generator Building (Photo 1) sits atop a gently sloping grass hill overlooking Town Lake to the south (Figure 7-6). To the east is Shoal Creek and a new, large outdoor electric substation that provides power to downtown Austin. To the west is a steel and masonry railroad bridge carrying tracks that sweep across the north edge of the site, which is bounded by West Third Street. West Cesar Chavez (formerly 1st) Street traverses the southern edge of the site, running parallel to the south facade of the Turbine Generator Building and separating it from the Water Intake Structure (Photo 2), which is perched at the lake's edge amidst Live Oak trees on City of Austin park property (Figure 7-7). The Turbine Generator Building looms above on a grass hill to the north, across West Cesar Chavez Street. The lack of adjacent buildings makes it difficult to assess the scale of both these immense structures and permits views of both from many locations in Austin; the Turbine Generator Building and the Water Intake Structure figure prominently in the cityscape. To the north of the Turbine Generator Building, sitting in an expanse of recently poured asphalt, is the much smaller Oil Heating Plant (Photo 3).

Turbine Generator Building

The Turbine Generator Building is a large enclosure originally made of four rectangular masses. The Turbine Room is an immense, undivided space 100 feet wide, 270 feet long, and 50 feet high. To the north and south are smaller rectangular appendages not quite as long or as tall as the Turbine Room, and the smallest of all spaces is a one-story rectangular volume on the east end (Figure 7-8). To the west is a low addition that represents one of the few changes to the original 1950s structure (Figure 7-9).

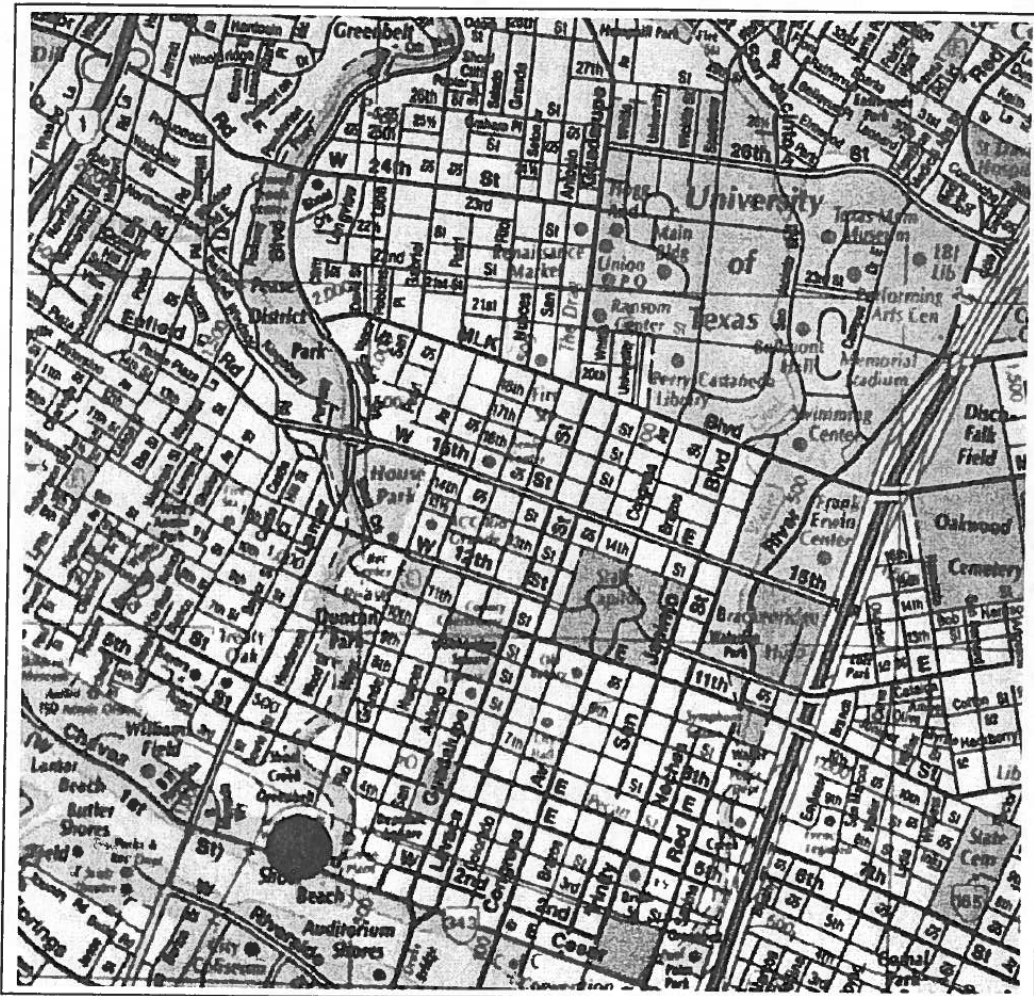
The principal (south) facade of the Turbine Generator Building (Photo 1) is situated close to the entry drive off West Cesar Chavez Street, behind a broad, sliding chain-link fence monitored by a small guard booth. The entries into the two-tiered generator building are within rectangular portals at the east and west ends of the nearly symmetrical facade. The only asymmetrical elements are two rectangular enclosures at grade,

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Seaholm Plant
Austin, Travis County, Texas



City of Austin Map. Seaholm Plant is represented by the black dot. North is up.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

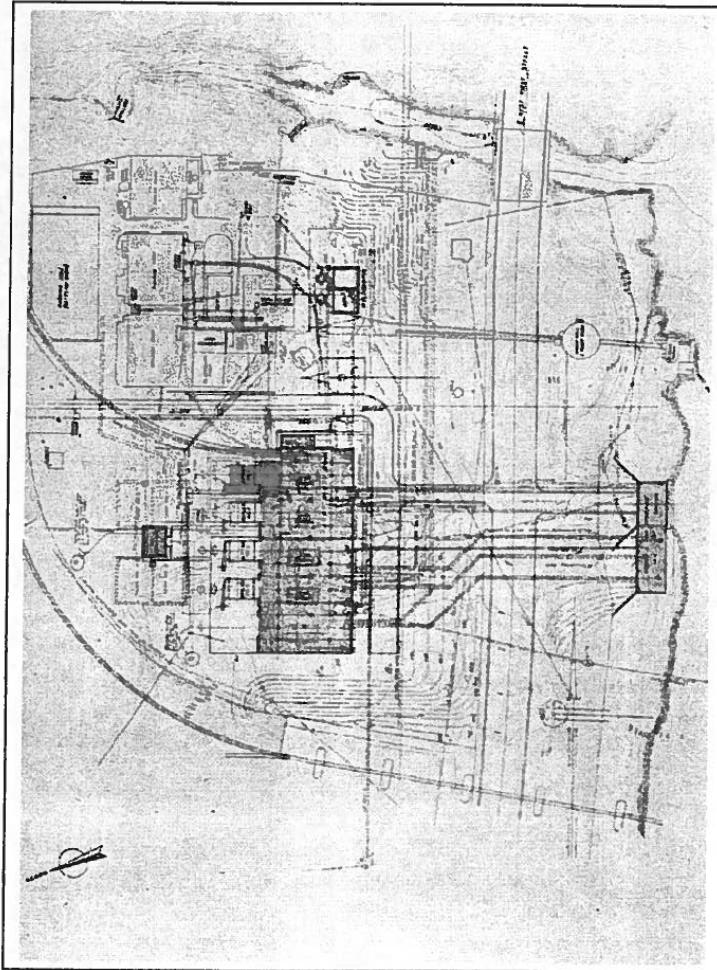
OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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Seaholm Plant
Austin, Travis County, Texas



Site Plan. North is to the left. The three shaded buildings (north to south) represent the Oil Heating Plant, Turbine Generator Building, and Water Intake Structure.¹

¹ From original ink on linen drawing by Burns & McDonnell in Austin Energy's drawing collection.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

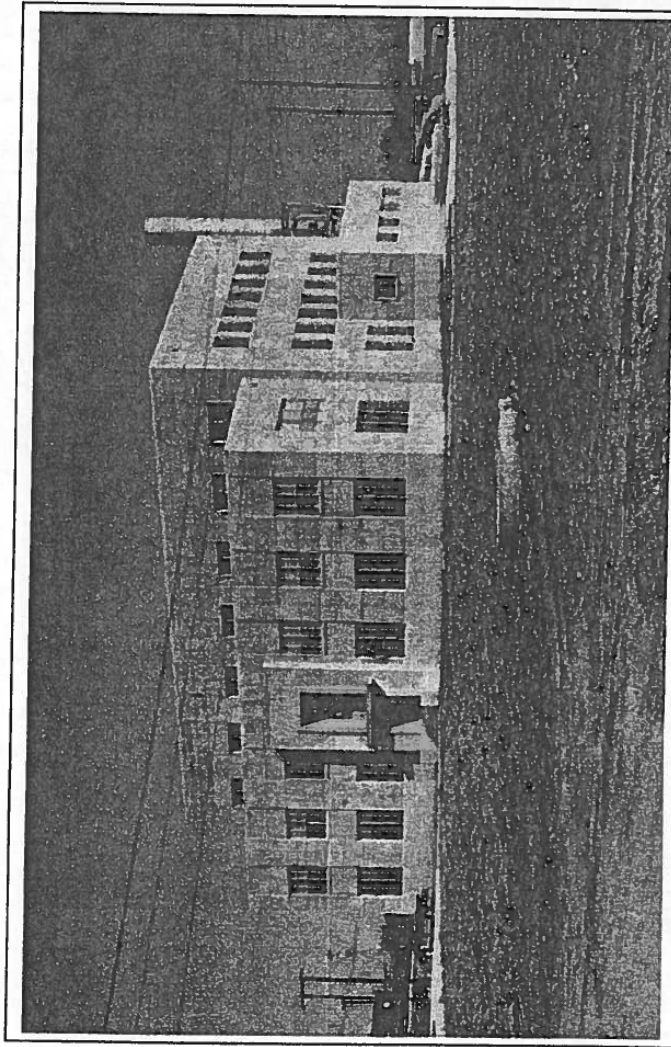
OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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Seaholm Plant
Austin, Travis County, Texas



Phase One Construction. Oblique view (historic, c. 1950) of south (principal) and east elevations, camera looking northwest.²

² PICA 26694, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

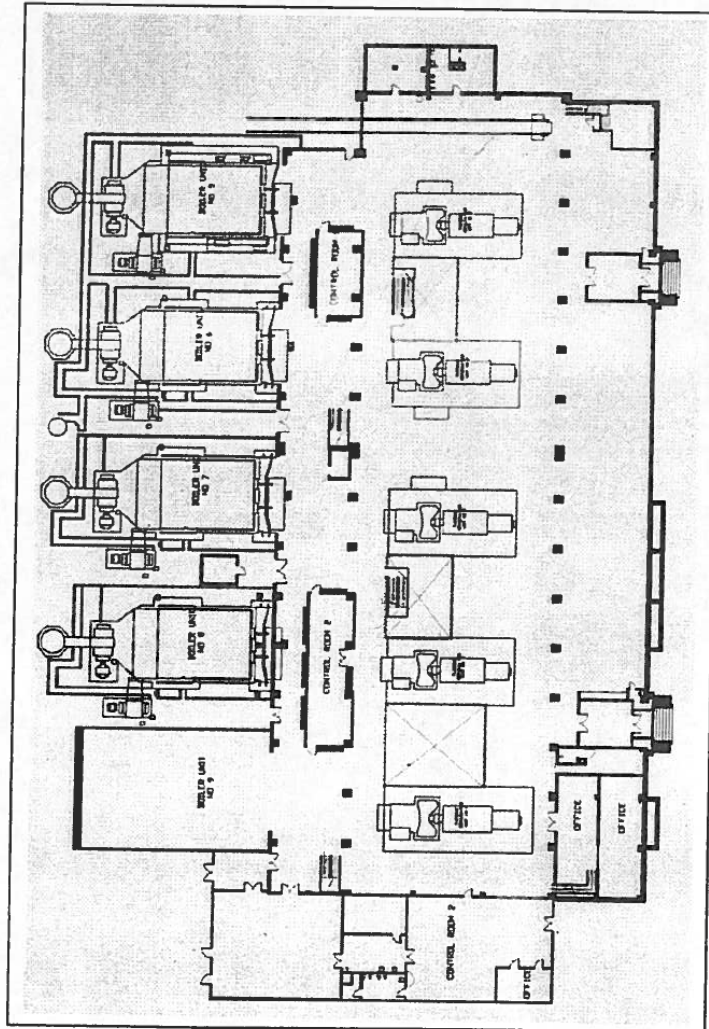
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Seaholm Plant
Austin, Travis County, Texas



1st Floor, Turbine Generator Building. North is to the left.³

³ Courtesy of Roy F. Weston, Inc.

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Seaholm Plant
Austin, Travis County, Texas

located at the middle and west ends of the building, that appear to be large planters but are actually openings for the ventilation intake vents below grade in the basement. These intake enclosures are as high as the water-table, which is made of smooth concrete with a beveled upper edge, and forms the base of both the Turbine Generator Building and the Oil Heating Plant. The water-table is only broken at doors, or where the boilers penetrate the Turbine Generator Building on the north side, and serves to unify both buildings.

Each southern entry leads into the office block at the south of the Turbine Generator Building through double-leaf aluminum frame doors with a four-light transom above, inset within a rubbed concrete portal. To either side of each door are terra cotta planters (added later) atop large concrete pedestals that abut either side of the protruding entry stairs, which are divided by three steel handrails (also added later). Covering each entry door is a flat awning faced in aluminum. Above the west entry, Moderne aluminum letters at the front edge of the awning spell "Light," while the east entry says "Power" (Photo 4). Above each awning is a nine-over-ten textured glass block light, upon which aluminum script reads "City of Austin" and displays a stylized, inverted lighting bolt symbolizing the building's power generating function. On the east entry is a metal plaque from the 1960 ceremony dedicating the plant to Walter E. Seaholm.

Although just the east entry was built first as part of the 1950 construction (Figure 7-8), the 1955 addition blends almost seamlessly with the older structure so that the entire building reads as one coherent whole (Photo 5). The facade is unified by concrete construction that was poured against form work to which narrow wooden battens were nailed, resulting in a scoring pattern that is used to decorate all elevations of every building and to lend unity to the entire plant. The scoring pattern also breaks the elevations into small square "panels" of four by four feet. The integrity of the squares is not violated anywhere except at corners and where the two phases of construction meet. The square panels march unbroken across the top of each elevation, and pairs of panels run vertically down the building, alternating with window openings of similar width.

All first floor windows on the principal facade are two-over-seven, divided light aluminum windows with two operable awnings, separated by a broad aluminum mullion. The second floor windows are similar, but only contain two-over-six lights with just one operable awning. The first floor windows sit on the water-table with no sill, but the second floor windows have cast stone sills. Between the first and second floor windows are concrete spandrel panels formed against fluted form work. Above the second story windows, the panelized wall construction resumes, but the region above each second floor window is recessed two inches.

The top of the principal facade terminates after two stories with a horizontal parapet, capped by a cast stone coping that hides the flat roof beyond. North of the principal facade the building rises again the equivalent of one more story, forming the exterior wall of the Turbine Room. This wall contains a number of clerestory windows that help light the Turbine Room, but the windows are obscured from the exterior at close-range by the protruding office block. Although the clerestory windows, which also continue around the east and north elevations, are also aluminum divided light windows, they are each framed by a one inch projection of smooth concrete, and the scored panels above are not recessed. The Turbine Room elevation also terminates in a parapet and a cast stone coping that obscures on all sides a very shallow gabled roof that runs east-west.