

Whereas, The Town Lake Corridor Study, 1985, is a foundational document for waterfront planning in Austin; and

Whereas, the Town Lake Corridor Study established “initial, benchmark planning and policy development for the Corridor,”¹ which include “protect and improve the water quality...to the highest achievable standards;” “create superior planning, design and mixing of land uses...;” “improve zoning...to achieve maximum pedestrian scale, highest degree of land use compatibility, and extraordinary urban design;” and “provide maximum visual and physical access to the waterfront;”² and

Whereas, the Combined Waterfront Overlay Ordinance states that decisions of officials and boards “shall be guided at all stages by the goals and policies of the Town Lake Corridor Study;”³ and

Whereas, the Town Lake Corridor Study recognized in the introduction section that the Study “could not represent a comprehensive plan,”⁴ and that the Study recommended a “...planning effort to develop a long-range comprehensive plan...addressing both the water’s edge and the urban edge;”⁵ and

Whereas, the 1985 recommendation to commence a comprehensive plan has yet to be initiated;

And Whereas, the 2000 Study of the South Shore Central/Travis Heights Sub-district of the Town Lake Corridor stated that “the Land Development Code and Waterfront Overlay District are not adequate to guide development in a way that will fully achieve the goals of the Town Lake Corridor Study,”⁶ and

Whereas, the recommendations from the Study of South Shore Central/Travis Heights Sub-district, which were meant to address the gap in comprehensive planning for the South Shore Central were not adopted or implemented;

And Whereas, the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board, recognizing that the South Shore Central Sub-district continues to be at particular risk, given the potential scope of redevelopment opportunities and the general lack of pedestrian access to and along the shore, made recommendations to the City Council to endorse an application for technical planning assistance in 2011 through the American Institute of Architects Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT) program; and

Whereas, with the City Council’s endorsement, the City was successful in securing the SDAT grant, which brought a team of national experts to town who engaged with over 200 citizens, land owners, City officials and staff over the course of two reconnaissance

¹ Town Lake Corridor Study (TLCS), page 1

² TLCS, pages 22-24

³ Austin Land Development Code, Section 25-2-710

⁴ TLCS, page 1

⁵ TLCS, page 67

⁶ South Shore Central/Travis Heights Development Standards Study, page 1

visits during the spring 2013 and three full days in June 2012, in order to craft independent recommendations for the South Shore Central;⁷ and

Whereas, the AIA/SDAT reaffirmed the values that the community holds for South Shore Central, especially in regards to increasing pedestrian access along the shore, pedestrian connections to the shore, improving water quality through green infrastructure, improved and increased public green space, achieving the highest standards for urban design, and the inclusion of affordable housing;⁸ and

Whereas, the SDAT Report presented one scenario for the South Shore Central which shows how future redevelopment might integrate public and private investments to achieve community values⁹, but cautioned that the current regulatory system, especially when decoupled from corresponding public investment planning, likely will not achieve community values¹⁰; and

Whereas, the SDAT Report, recognizing the particular importance of increasing public green space along the waterfront and pedestrian connections to the shore, recommended that “Austin should create a fund dedicated to purchasing and maintaining waterfront land for future generations,”¹¹ and outlined financing strategies for this purpose which should be explored within a comprehensive planning process for the South Shore Central, and

Whereas, the SDAT Report recommends that the City undertake a comprehensive planning process for South Shore Central which would include city-wide engagement to produce a long-term civic vision for integrated public and private development and the accompanying regulatory and governing mechanisms needed to realize the vision¹²;

And Whereas, the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board, leveraging the momentum from the SDAT process, recommended that the South Shore Central Sub-district be used as a demonstration site for the testing of an scenario analytic tool that is being developed as part of the HUD-funded Sustainable Places Project; and

Whereas, the Sustainable Places Project subsequently applied the resources from its prime consultant, Fregonese Associates from Portland, Oregon, as well as resources from the University of Texas School of Architecture, and City staff, to model three scenarios for South Shore Central in the enhanced Envision Tomorrow analytic tool to measure over thirty performance indicators including, but not limited to, measuring return on investment and financial feasibility, impacts to water quality, impacts to municipal budgets, potential for district-wide value capture, jobs-to-housing ratios,

⁷ Designing South Shore Central, AIA Communities by Design SDAT Report, 2012 (SDAT Report), pages 5-6

⁸ SDAT Report, pages 12-20

⁹ SDAT Report, pages 41-50, 57-63

¹⁰ SDAT Report, pages 8-10, 17-20

¹¹ SDAT Report, page 64

¹² SDAT Report, pages 52-55, 63

overall density, walkability, net increase/decrease in open space, and energy savings from green infrastructure; and

Whereas, the three scenarios analyzed and illustrated by the Sustainable Places Project included a future build-out under current zoning regulations and Waterfront Overlay provisions, and compared that scenario to a future build-out scenario as depicted in the SDAT Report and a future build-out to a SDAT modified scenario, developed by the UT School of Architecture/Texas Futures Lab, which included urban rail; and

Whereas, the at the May 13, 2013 Waterfront Planning Advisory Board meeting, John Fregonese presented the three scenarios and demonstrated through drawings and the analytic tool measures that the current regulations will not guarantee or achieve enhanced waterfront access, will not increase pedestrian connectivity to the shore, will not achieve superior urban design, will not achieve better water quality, will not increase public green space, nor achieve other community values to any degree or the same degree as alternative scenarios might¹³; and

Whereas, Mr. Fregonese demonstrated that two of the scenarios tested (the SDAT, and the SDAT modified) more than doubled the amount of open green space (21 acres and 19 acres, respectively) than would be achieved under the current regulatory system for the South Shore Central (88 acres overall), and

Whereas, Mr. Fregonese presented that the scenario analysis for South Shore Central indicates the potential of capturing up to \$21 million annual net revenue to fund community benefits, adding up to 1,400 new jobs with a more balanced jobs-housing mix, achieving an integrated green infrastructure system, and increasing public access, public green space and pedestrian connectivity to the shore, and being able to accomplish all of this at the same relative build-out density that is currently entitled; and

Whereas, Mr. Fregonese recommended that the City move quickly to commence a comprehensive small-area plan for South Shore Central, with accompanying ordinances, coordinated green infrastructure planning, including planning for increased public green space, urban design standards, and financial modeling and strategies in order to optimize public and private development to achieve community values;

Now Therefore, Be It Resolved by the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board:

Recommends that the Austin City Council initiates a comprehensive small-area planning process for the South Shore Central which should:

- 1) Be guided by community values as enumerated in the Town Lake Corridor Study and further endorsed and elaborated by the public in the SDAT process, including, but not limited to:

¹³ John Fregonese's full presentation is available on video. Links and timestamp index @:
www.austintexas.gov/waterfront

- a) increasing pedestrian access along the shore and pedestrian connections to the shore, improving water quality through a district-wide green infrastructure system, increase public green space and parks, achieving the highest standards for urban design, and identifying funding and other strategies for the inclusion of affordable housing and acquisition of other community benefits;
- 2) Provide opportunity for community engagement by all stakeholders, including, but not limited to:
 - a) Sub-district residents, business-owners and property owners; adjacent neighborhood associations; non-profit and advocacy groups for Town Lake Trails, Town Lake, Auditorium Shores, shoreline ecology, etc; retail and merchant groups; transit and mobility groups; affordable housing advocates; etc.
- 3) Provide adequate funding for appropriate consultant services and allocate adequate staff resources to be effective;
- 4) Build on the work of the Sustainable Places Project analytic tool to further develop the open-source modeling of financial, economic, environmental, physical and social impacts of scenario planning;
- 5) Create an integrated district-wide public and private redevelopment vision which best achieves community values and is financially feasible, and include an implementation plan which coordinates public and private investments;
- 6) Create a regulatory framework which will best assure the predictable development for achieving the vision;
- 7) Recommend associated governance mechanisms and analysis for potential financial mechanisms to achieve the vision, particularly with regards to increasing the amount of public green space in South Shore Central which may include but not be limited to “acquiring land for public use through purchase in fee simple or through granting of conservation easements, [raising funds through] bond issues, dedicated taxes, fundraising, personal philanthropy, grants and the creation of a tax increment financing district;”¹⁴
- 8) Commence and complete the comprehensive small-area planning process as soon as possible;
- 9) Create a working group of Waterfront Planning Advisory Board members to serve as an advisory group in order to inform, advise and review the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and any subsequent documents; and
- 10) Recognize that the Plan is to be subject to both periodic review and to final review and approval by the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board.

¹⁴ SDAT Report, page 64