

Public Engagement Summary

Introduction

Public input was a critical component in the creation of the Seaholm planning process for the City of Austin. As a central civic asset for all of Austin's residents and visitors, ensuring robust opportunities for community input was essential. And while ideas and inspiration were also taken from national best practice models, those ideas were grounded in an understanding of what the community desires for the continued development and oversight of the Seaholm site.

The public engagement efforts of the project had many different components including the in-person, print, and digital-media strategies (see the original Public Engagement Plan for a full list.) The primary input methods included

- Public Open House Events (Spring, Fall, Winter 2017)
- Technical Advisory Group Meetings (Summer, Fall 2017)
- Planning Partner Meetings (Spring and Fall 2017)
- On-line Surveys (throughout the project)
- Focus Groups (Summer 2017)

Each individual engagement component played a specific part in development of the plan. The first Planning Partner Meeting, Public Open House and Online Survey helped the team to develop the overall framework of initial themes that guided the development of plan. The second Planning Partner Meeting, Public Open House and Online Survey served as a chance to update the public at large about how the plan was developing, and to gather feedback on the ideas that were emerging from within the more focused survey results and stakeholder discussions. The Focus Groups provided an opportunity to gather input from representatives of minority groups to ensure a diversity of perspectives were included within the plan. Technical Advisory Group Meetings ensured that planning efforts were in alignment with other citywide departments and goals.

This Public Engagement Summary explains the methods and results for each of these strategies and outlines how the information gathered in each phase of the plan's creation helped to structure and inform the overall creation of the plan itself.

Open Houses

Over the course of the project there were three facilitated Public Open House Events that aimed to gather input on desirable and appropriate uses for the site and building and collect feedback on the proposed vision elements for the site.

- The first Public Open House Meeting was held on June 24, 2017 at [\(4\) distributed locations](#) at and around the Seaholm Waterfront and aimed to introduce the study and gather public input on desires and aspirations for uses and activities at the building and surrounding site.
- The second Public Open House Meeting was held on September 23, 2017 at the Zilker Botanical Garden and aimed to bring back the initial vision elements for the site in order to affirm the project's guiding principles and gather additional feedback on concepts for the building and site, identify priorities and share information on potential project operations and phasing.
- The third Public Open House Meeting was held on December 2, 2017 and aimed to get feedback on the preliminary design ideas for the building and surrounding parkland.

First Public Open House

The first Public Open House was held on June 24, 2017 and was designed to be geographically distributed at [4 different locations](#) including:

- Pfluger Pedestrian Bridge
- Butler Splash Pad
- Vic Mathias Auditorium Shores Deck, and
- Seaholm Intake Facility

Each location was staffed with project team members and volunteers who had information about the project, the intercept survey (digitally and on paper), as well as photos of the site. [See Survey section for a list of questions asked of the public.] Visitors were able to engage in conversations about the project, take the survey, and sign up to receive information on upcoming events about the project. Unfortunately, due to bad weather the three off-site tables had to be closed but visitors were still received at the Seaholm Intake Facility. Approximately 75 people dropped in and provided input during the Public Open House event.

Second Public Open House

The Second Public Open House took place on Saturday, September 23, 2017 at the Zilker Botanical Garden community meeting room. The meeting was designed in traditional open house style with a total of six stations. Stations included:

1. Seaholm in the Public Eye
2. Seaholm's Place in Nature
3. Seaholm's Place in the City
4. Seaholm in History
5. Seaholm Now
6. Seaholm – What would YOU like to see?

In addition to the six stations, handouts were available that listed the overarching project values as well and the PARD policy from the Master Plan that gives support to the development of public/private partnerships. A final area was also on site where two different kids' activities were made available and staffed with professional arts educators from the Dougherty Arts Center.

[Presentation Boards](#)

[Studio Gang Video Presentation](#)

[Meeting Notes](#)

[Sign In Sheets](#)

[Digital Open House](#)

[Photos](#)

Third Public Open House

The Third Public Open House took place on Saturday, December 2, 2017 and was held in front of the Seaholm Intake Structure. The meeting was designed to give participants an opportunity to review and respond to design concepts for the building and the surrounding parkland.

A review of the six stations presented previously were on display, as well as design and programming ideas for the adaptive use of the historic Seaholm Intake Structure. Additionally three preliminary ideas for the building's front yard were on display.

[Presentation Boards](#)

[Photos](#)

Technical Advisory Group

For all PARD planning projects, a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of staff representing city divisions and departments is convened to participate in the planning process. The role of the TAG member is to serve as a liaison to their respective departments; respond to the requests for information from the design team; and ensure recommendations are in alignment with other city projects, plans and goals. TAG members were encouraged to attend public events, but were also engaged directly through a meeting September 21, 2017 and again through a conference call on November 8, 2017.

The Seaholm Waterfront Project included representatives from the following departments:

- Active Transportation, Austin Transportation Dept.
- Urban Trails Program, Public Works Dept.
- Cesar Chavez Promenade Project Mgmt, Public Works Dept.
- Economic Development Dept.
- Watershed Protection Dept.
- Central Library, Austin Public Library
- Urban Design Division, Planning and Zoning Dept.
- Office of Sustainability
- Historic Preservation Office
- PARD Park Development
- PARD Grounds Maintenance
- PARD Museums and Cultural Centers
- PARD Community Engagement

[Link to Technical Advisory Group List](#)

Planning Partner Meetings

Another component of the project outreach strategy were the two facilitated Planning Partner Meetings. The Planning Partners group comprised representatives from an array of stakeholder organizations representing civic, conservation, non-profit, residential and governmental entities. The group provided input on the process, including public engagement, and helped foster outreach to the community. The first meeting shared information about the study, sought to gain insights on aspirations for the site and building, obtain feedback the public engagement approach, and gather ideas and support for outreach efforts. The second meeting aimed to gather feedback on a draft vision for the project and potential economic, operational and programming opportunities.

Planning Partners Meeting 1

The first Planning Partners meeting took place on Friday, June 9, 2017 and was held both at the Seaholm Waterfront site and the Umbel Conference Room. Attendees gathered together at the site in the morning for a tour of the Seaholm Intake building and Seaholm Waterfront. Then the group walked together to the Umbel Conference Room to discuss their impressions of the building, and receive feedback on the goals and direction of the overall project.

[Agenda and Meeting Notes](#)

[Sign-In Sheets](#)

[Photos](#)

Planning Partners Meeting 2

The second Planning Partners meeting took place on Friday, September 22, 2017 and was held at Cirrus Logic in the Rolling Stone Conference Room. The goal of the meeting was to present the overall information that was to be presented at the Open House and to get feedback that could help the team structure the conversations that would take place at the Public Open House the next day.

Studio Gang delivered a slide presentation of the work completed to date and a larger discussion was held regarding how to craft the larger vision for the project based on the diverse needs and desires of the Austin community.

[Agenda and Meeting Notes](#)

[Sign In Sheets](#)

[Guiding Principles for Partnerships](#)

[Slides](#)



Salon

In an effort to reach out specifically to the design, planning and historic preservation professional communities in Austin, a specific information gathering session was held on Thursday, September 21, 2017. Organizations including the University of Texas School of Architecture, AIA Austin, CNU Central Texas, Preservation Austin, ASLA Austin and ULI were asked to send representatives to attend the meeting. Space was offered by the design firm TBG for the event. At this meeting Gia Biagi from Studio Gang gave a project overview and a summary presentation that matched the Planning Partners meeting which was to follow the next day. After the presentation, attendees had a chance to ask the Studio Gang team specific questions and a general conversation was held about the nature of the project, potential visions, and how future implementation might occur.

[Sign-In Sheets](#)

[Slides](#)

[Photos](#)

Focus Groups

The goal of the initial phase of plan outreach was to develop a specific understanding of the perspectives from all Austin citizens about any potential Seaholm programming and site renovation. The initial survey results revealed that not all demographics from the Austin community were represented within the results, and therefore, the planning team employed additional planning tools to ensure that a wide diversity of perspectives were included within the plan.

Working with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department staff, a series of potential contacts who have deep connections with communities of color (Asian, African American, Hispanic/Latino) were identified to help with outreach for the different groups. Working jointly on outreach, Ms. Osgood from GO collaborative, and Ms. Miller from Civic Collaboration contacted each person via email. Any email addresses that returned an undeliverable response were researched, corrected, and re-sent.

Once liaisons were identified within each community, conversations were set up. Sessions typically lasted 60 minutes and notes were taken in real time and sent to the participants for their review.

Outreach

List of Initial Outreach Contacts

- Darryl Horton, Chair, African American Resource Advisory Commission
- Vincent Cobalis, Chair, Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission
- Jill Ramirez, Chair, Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission
- Ricardo Hernandez, Chair, Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board
- Marina Bhargava, Executive Director, Greater Austin Asian American Chamber of Commerce
- Taja Beekley, Site Supervisor, Asian American Resource Center
- Tam Hawkins, President and CEO, Greater Austin Black Chamber of Commerce
- Rev. Freddie Dixon, Board Chair, Six Square
- Bamidele Demerson, George Washington Carver Cultural Center and Museum

[Meeting Structure and Focus Group Agenda/Questions](#)

[Focus Group Notes](#)

[Memo to Board and Commissions, including Quality of Life Commissions](#)

Online Surveys and General Feedback

An on-line digital public engagement survey tool was used to enable meaningful and far reaching public involvement. The Project Team conducted a survey at the project launch to gather feedback on desires and aspirations for uses and activities at the building and surrounding site. A second separate on-line survey was conducted following the second Public Open House event to serve as a “virtual” open house so those who could not attend in person could see the Open House information and provide their input. A third separate on-line survey was conducted following the third Public Open House event to serve as a “virtual” open house so those who could not attend in person could see the Open House information and provide their input. The surveys were promoted via the Project Team’s websites, social media outlets and via electronic communications to Outreach List contacts.

[June-July 2017 Survey Questions & Results](#)

[September 23, 2017 Digital Open House](#)

[December, 2017 Survey Questions & Results](#)

[Link to feedback provided via email throughout the process](#)