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# City Leadership

To accomplish the Vision, the City will need to be proactive in pursuing partnerships with private owners, developers, agencies, and other private and public entities. The City will need to make strategic capital investments to share the risk with the private community. The City will need to establish a suite of financial and district management tools, as outlined in this Plan. The scope and combination of innovative finance tools and partnerships, which builds on national best practices, will allow the South Central Waterfront to be a inspirational first example of district planning for the City. The South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan is based on the confidence that if other cities can accomplish this, then the City of Austin can do so as well.

Adopting the South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan into the City's Comprehensive Plan – Imagine Austin – is the critical next step, not the final step, to achieving the Vision. Adopting the South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan does not change zoning entitlements or implement the funding tools. However, adoption does set in motion a series of Next Steps to move the Vision forward. Many of these Next Steps, which include recommendations such as completing follow-up feasibility studies on specific financial tools, will require their own process, timeline, and approval, with the appropriate checks and balances along the way.

Adopting the South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan is not the end of a process, but the beginning. The SCW Vision Framework Plan points to the possibility of what we might achieve if we pursue the opportunity to shape the future of this district while there is still a chance.

## **Artist's rendering of the test scenario for the South Central Waterfront (Left)**

*This rendering is a "what if" illustration that imagines how the South Central Waterfront might appear twenty years from now. The rendering begins with a framework of a quality public realm and pedestrian-scaled blocks on the ground, and adds in new development with enough density to provide the incentives for developers to help pay for the public realm and hundreds of units of affordable housing.*

# Implementing the Plan

## Phasing Considerations

The SCW Framework Plan presents a holistic redevelopment program for the area and envisions a vibrant, sustainable mixed-use waterfront urban neighborhood. The SCW Plan provides a path to transforming the district with vital streetscapes, enhanced connectivity through the area and to surrounding neighborhoods, a range of open space amenities, and hundreds of units of affordable housing. Reorienting a district at this scale will require phased implementation, most likely triggered by private property owners as they move forward with redeveloping land and enter into binding development agreements with the City. Given market conditions that continue to encourage new development in the area, the City expects the first phase of development to occur within the next few years.

## Governance and Organization

### **Establish a South Central Waterfront Development Corporation**

A development corporation could provide the district with a suite of predevelopment and development services to assist the execution of both public and private projects within the district. This development corporation could facilitate and advocate for necessary public approvals, champion city-building public infrastructure to support development, and package a range of incentives and funding tools necessary to achieve the aspirations of the South Central Waterfront Vision. A development corporation can be structured as a public entity, a non-profit or a private venture, and can include public and private partners in either option. Upon adoption of this plan, the City should take the necessary steps to research the feasibility and potential structure of a South Central Waterfront Development Corporation. Recommendations and an ordinance to implement should be returned for City Council consideration as soon as possible.

### **Establish a SCW Public Improvement District**

A public improvement district (PID) could provide funding for projects in the district, as identified in the Plan, including infrastructure and affordable housing. The PID could also provide management for programs, district services and additional maintenance of the public realm. The City should take the necessary steps to evaluate the feasibility of a PID, including evaluation of whether to expand the existing downtown PID or create a new SCW PID. This evaluation should make detailed PID projections on project/program costs and identify the assessments required to achieve the PID goals.

### **Mandate a SCW Advisory Group Appointed by City Council**

The SCW Initiative benefited from ongoing engagement with the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board (WPAB) up until the WPAB was dissolved in June 2015. Moreover, the WPAB created a South Central Waterfront Stakeholder Outreach Committee (SOC) in January 2014 to provide additional representation and expertise to the SCW Initiative and the SCW Initiative has benefited from this informal committee. The SCW SOC included representatives from the WPAB plus representatives from adjacent neighborhoods to the SCW, SCW property owners, real estate professionals, affordable housing professionals, and the Texas School for the Deaf. Staff has informally continued to work with the SCW SOC to facilitate dialogue and outreach. The currently active membership of the SCW SOC, as last authorized by the WPAB, is listed in the Acknowledgments section of this document. A Council authorized SCW Advisory Group could provide continuity and communication among stakeholders and advocates as the SCW Plan moves towards implementation, as well as provide recommendations to the city council and city boards as Next Steps proceed, outlined in this Plan.

### **Coordinate City government to effectively implement the plan**

The City Manager should identify a lead city department and staff to implement the SCW Plan, and key City departments should assign point individuals to an interdepartmental work group with a central oversight role for plan implementation. This group should coordinate efforts of all affected City departments, and act as the liaison to the SCW Advisory Group, the South Central Waterfront Development, and other entities which may be formed.

## Regulatory Amendments

### **Adopt the South Central Waterfront Vision Framework**

Upon adoption, this Vision Framework Plan will become an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan and amend the growth concept map to add a regional center to the area covered by the plan.

### **Make amendments to other plans**

Adoption of this Vision Framework Plan will set in motion due process and the necessary steps to amend any existing plan affected.

### **Coordinate with CodeNEXT**

The creation of a Regulating Plan for the South Central Waterfront District will be assigned to the CodeNEXT Initiative.

## Capital Improvement Projects

### **Coordinate with Projects Identified in the Capital Improvement Program Pipeline and Rolling Needs Assessment**

Several infrastructure projects in the South Central Waterfront district are already identified in the City's Five-Year Capital Improvement Program Pipeline and Rolling Needs Assessment. Most of these projects provide enhancements to existing facilities and will need to coordinate with any improvements recommended by the SCW Vision Framework Plan. These projects are described in more detail in Appendix V. Notable planned projects include streetscape improvements to Congress Avenue, shoreline restoration of Lady Bird Lake, and ongoing programs to rehabilitate and reconstruct arterial and neighborhood streets, install bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and address water quality problems identified by the Watershed Protection Master Plan.

### **Waterfront Park and District Open Space**

The waterfront park is a pivotal feature for the area. Its realization must be tied to and integrated with the redevelopment of the Statesman site. That said, if the City wants to complete the park before the Statesman site is redeveloped, it could take either of two approaches, each conditional on reaching a development agreement with the Statesman property owners:

- 1) Build the entire park at once by floating a general obligation bond, using philanthropic sources, or a combination of the two.
- 2) Phase construction over time. If phasing is required due to funding and redevelopment issues, then the City could use a combination of tax increment revenues, a public improvement district, and/or philanthropic sources.

## Expand Funding Toolkit

To achieve the public realm and affordable housing vision, the City of Austin and other providers need to enact tools such as a public improvement district, tax credits, TDRs, and land write downs to help secure sites for affordable units and to finance new affordable and mixed-income developments on publicly-owned and private sites. The adoption of this plan will set in motion the required next steps to initiate feasibility studies and potential ordinances for Council to consider for the creation of a Public Improvement District, Transfer of Development Rights ordinance, and Tax Increment Finance District.

# Next Steps

City Action	Timeframe		Key Partners	
	0-1 yr	2+ yr	City	Other
<b>Identify lead entity in City to coordinate efforts moving forward and assign lead person</b>	X		CMO	
<b>Create cross-departmental City team with assigned departmental points of contact</b>	X		Multiple Departments	
<b>Create a South Central Waterfront Advisory Group</b>	X		Council	
<b>Coordinate with ongoing city initiatives</b> The adoption of the SCW Vision Framework Plan includes recommendations that should be coordinated with the following initiatives (not a complete list): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congress Avenue Urban Design Study</li> <li>• CPO Strategic Capital Planning</li> <li>• ATD Transportation Criteria Manual</li> <li>• Bicycle and Sidewalk Master Plans</li> <li>• CodeNEXT</li> <li>• Revision of Watershed Ordinance and update of Watershed Master Plan</li> <li>• Downtown Austin Parking Strategy</li> <li>• Movability Austin</li> <li>• Project Connect</li> </ul>	X	X	ATD, CPO, Planning, PWD, Watershed, NHCD, Others	Downtown Austin Alliance, Downtown Austin Transportation Management Assoc., CapMetro
<b>Closure of free-right turn lane and creation of Barton Springs Rain Gardens</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue coordination with key properties and multiple departments to implement SCW Vision.</li> <li>• Develop Policy and program for Council consideration to facilitate conversion of ROW from transportation to public space.</li> <li>• Develop and implement tactical, interim, and long -term implementation to realize Barton Springs Rain Gardens.</li> </ul>	X		Planning, Transportation, Public Works, Water Energy, Real Estate, Legal	Affected Property Owners
<b>Develop a SCW Public Art Master Plan</b>	X		Art in Public Places, Economic Development	Artists and arts groups
<b>Coordinate with Texas School for the Deaf / Texas Facilities Commission</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with the Texas Facilities Commission and the TSD to incorporate the SCW schematic designs into the TSD Master Plan.</li> <li>• Explore public/private partnerships, State and Federal funding, and other grants and philanthropic donors to realize the trail along Bouldin Creek.</li> </ul>	X		Parks, Planning, Public Works, Watershed	Texas School for the Deaf, Texas Facilities Commission

City Action	Timeframe		Key Partners	
	0-1 yr	2+ yr	City	Other
<b>Initiate Public Improvement District evaluation</b> To evaluate the feasibility of a Public Improvement District, the City will need to engage property owners in a similar process to the tax increment study. The process should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with private property owners and the Downtown Austin Alliance. Since part of the area is already within a PID, the City will need to 1) assess the benefits and costs of expanding the PID or creating new one.</li> <li>Identify potential PID eligible projects and programs and conduct detailed PID projections on project/program costs.</li> <li>Identify assessments required to achieve PID goals</li> <li>Complete the steps required for PID adoption, detailed in the Local Government Code Chapter 372. Improvement Districts in Municipalities and Counties (<a href="http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.372.htm">http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.372.htm</a>)</li> </ul>	X		Economic Development, Finance	Coordinate with taxing jurisdictions, Downtown Austin Alliance. Potential consultant support
<b>Initiate Development Corporation / Authority Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate potential structures for a South Central Waterfront Development Authority</li> </ul>	X		Economic Development, Finance, Legal	Potential consultant support
<b>Transfer of Development Rights.</b> Evaluate the potential of a TDR ordinance that defines TDR areas and develops a sender and receiver structure. The structure would address among other factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to value development rights.</li> <li>How the development rights can be used by the receiving entity (e.g., more FAR and/or height as well as other conditions such as possible affordable housing commitment either on site or a fee-in-lieu).</li> <li>Who is eligible to buy the rights (e.g., private property owners and developers, the City, non-profits). There are several possible "sender" properties. Three of these could include One Texas Center (related to affordable housing), the Cox properties (related to the waterfront park), and the Crockett properties (related to the plaza).</li> </ul>	X		Legal, CodeNEXT	Potential consultant support
<b>Develop a Regulating Plan</b> The City should aim to set up regulatory conditions that lead to changes in the entitlements to the area over time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate incentives and form-based code provisions to provide clarity for public realm and urban design intentions</li> </ul>		X	Coordinate with CodeNEXT staff and consultants	

City Action	Timeframe		Key Partners	
	0-1 yr	2+ yr	City	Other
<b>Evaluate the feasibility of Tax Increment Financing in the SCW</b> Prepare a TIF/TIRZ feasibility study that builds on the preliminary projections in the SCW framework plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarify that the area meets statutory blight requirements</li> <li>• assess projected absorption potential for varying product types</li> <li>• factor in possible sales tax increment in addition to property tax</li> <li>• evaluate alternative boundaries</li> <li>• make assumptions about projects that may be tax-exempt</li> <li>• identify desired TIF eligible projects and programs</li> </ul> Additional information on the process to set up a TIRZ are summarized in the Local Economic Development Handbook.[1]	X		Transportation, Economic Development, Finance	Coordinate with taxing jurisdictions. Potential consultant support.
<b>Evaluate the potential of a Parking Management District.</b> The City should evaluate the potential for investment in district parking options that can provide public parking to support area uses.	X		Transportation, Economic Development, Finance	
<b>Refine affordable housing implementation strategy</b> This includes refining MFI target goals, identifying phased opportunities for site acquisition and implementation of various product types. Identify key partners and lead roles for each component of the toolkit.	X		NHCD, Real Estate	Potential affordable housing partners.
<b>Initiate conversations with potential philanthropic donors.</b> The City has had initial discussions with existing foundations and trusts such as The Trail Foundation, and the St. Davis Foundation about potential partnership. As part of continuing conversations, the City will discuss the feasibility of developing a South Waterfront Conservancy.	X	X	City Council, Departments TBD	