



FLOOD SCENE  
WALLER CREEK  
AUSTIN TEX. 1915

# Racial Landscaping: A Brief History of Park Planning along Lower Waller Creek



Austin, 1880





## A Social Survey of Austin, 1913

...people are crowded together in small huts, one and two families in a one-room shanty, and little children are forced to play out in the dusty street on the filthy, dirty creek or river bank where their homes are located.

# A City Plan for Austin, 1928

...we are recommending the ultimate establishment of a neighborhood park in the vicinity of Eleventh and Twelfth Streets just east of the I& G N Railroad...The topography is very rough and is at present occupied by the cheapest type of negro shacks, whereas the property immediately adjoining is more valuable and can eventually be residential property of the highest order. The acquisition of this property for park purposes, and the removal of the present type of development, will increase the value of the surrounding property many times the cost of the acquisition thereof.

# A City Plan for Austin, 1928

The property immediately north of Palm School, on account of being isolated and cut up by Waller Creek, is very cheap property, and in a neglected state ... The block to the west of Palm School ... is also very cheap property and will remain so as long as Waller Creek is permitted to continue in its present condition. It is our recommendation that these tracts of land be acquired by the city, and that the course of Waller Creek be straightened ... Second Street from Red River to East Avenue and Sabine Street from First to Third could be vacated and this entire tract converted into a very desirable neighborhood play ground.

# A City Plan for Austin, 1928

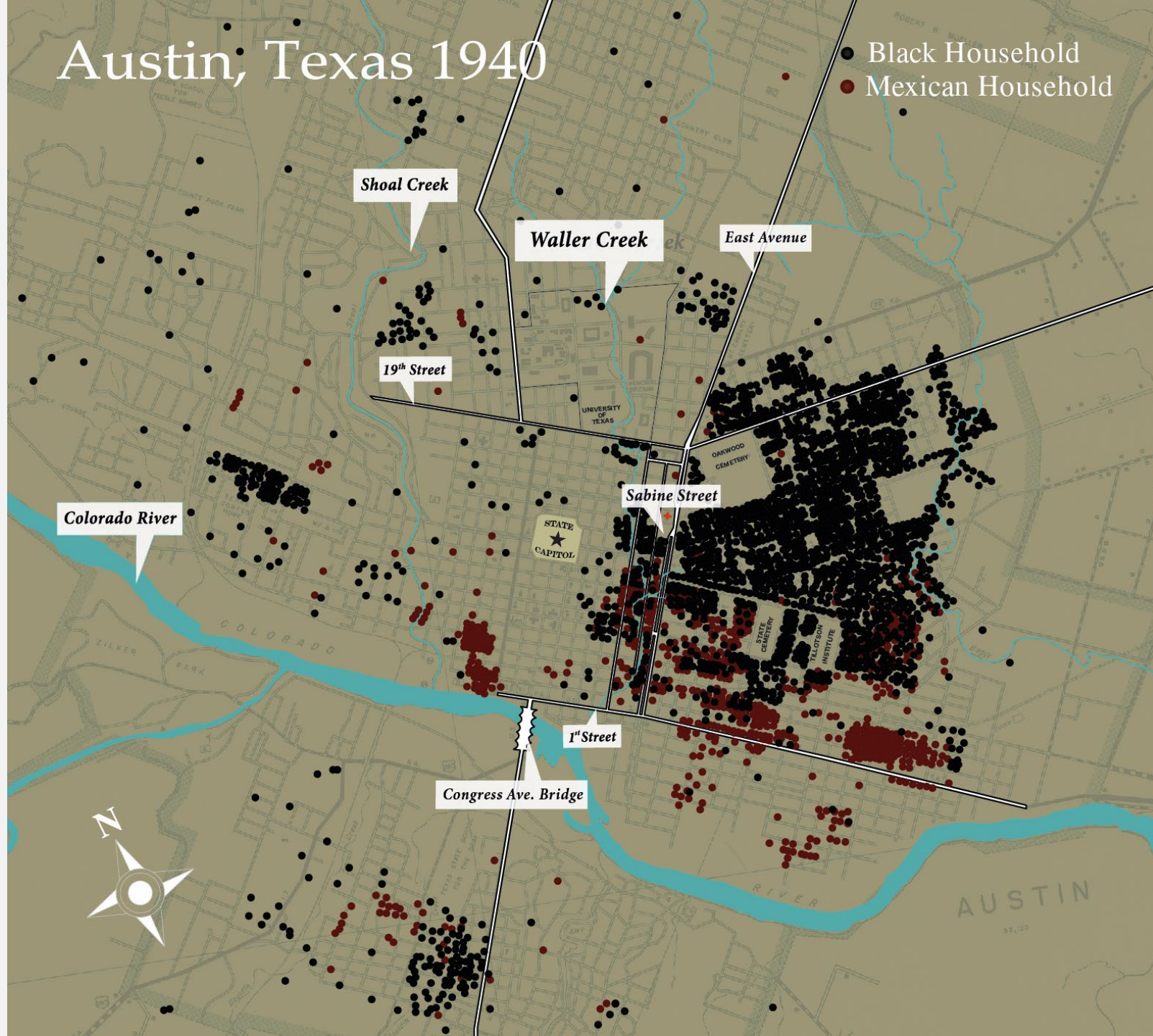
[The] Shoal Creek Valley ... is flanked on either side by high bluffs, and very desirable residential property. Between the bluffs ... are considerable lowlands which are not particularly desirable for residential use. We are recommending that the lowlands of this valley be acquired for a large park ... to control the nature of developments of the bluff front properties.

The completion of this drive will entail the acquisition of certain cheap property along the banks of Waller Creek from Eighth Street to Nineteenth Street. Most of the property which will be needed is at present occupied by very unsightly and unsanitary shacks inhabited by negroes. With these buildings removed...remaining property will be of a substantial and more desirable type.



# Austin, Texas 1940

- Black Household
- Mexican Household



# Red River Antique Strip





## *Texas Observer, 1955*

Within a two-minute walk of the spreading lawns of the Capitol grounds, eight people live in three rooms with wood for heat and no glass in the windows. On up the same street, a Mexican mother keeps her four children in two rooms with wide cracks between the floorboards.



This, too, is Austin. This is the shame of a city—and so close under the proud Capitol dome you can almost hear the full-throated oratory in the halls of state. Here along the banks of Waller Creek most of the

stoves burn wood, the plumbing is outside, the roofs are tin, the walls give year around air conditioning, and the dirt streets hold water.

American-Statesman/Bill Thompson

# Brackenridge Urban Renewal Project, 1967

To enhance the project areas as a “front-door” to the City of Austin and the State Capitol grounds, a public parkway along Waller Creek is proposed ... which will in turn enhance the economic value of those private redevelopment parcels adjacent thereto. This space will also serve as a drainage area since most of this proposed dedicated parking is subject to flooding by Waller Creek on a 50-year frequency.