





## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**THROUGH:** Susana Carbajal, Assistant City Manager 

**FROM:** Jorge Morales, P.E., CFM, Director, Watershed Protection Department 

**DATE:** January 17, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Staff Update on Waller Creek District Program (Resolution No. 20241010-070)

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On October 10, 2024, City Council passed [Resolution 20241010-070](#) related to the Waller Creek District, also known as the Waterloo Greenway, directing the City Manager to provide information and recommendations regarding the following:

1. Spatial requirements for creek bank stabilization, pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure, and any other Waterloo Greenway plan elements.
2. Quantification of ecosystem services for any new riparian areas and options for environmental infrastructure that achieve superior environmental results on smaller land footprints.
3. Maps showing the Waterloo Greenway Design Plan and spatial requirements considering the existing cultural and economic resources.

### **Brief Background**

The City and Waterloo Greenway Conservancy (WGC) are developing the Waterloo Greenway along a restored Waller Creek in downtown Austin. Extending from Waterloo Park to Lady Bird Lake, it will include 35 acres of public green space along 1.5 miles of a restored and ecologically resilient Waller Creek. Within the park system, there will be three miles of new hike and bike trails, public art installations, play spaces for family and children, and engaging cultural programs. The revitalized urban ecosystem will reintroduce community-centered spaces to our City—transforming a historically neglected corridor impacted by flash floods, poor water quality, and crumbling infrastructure into an extraordinary park system for Austin.

### **Staff Response**

1. Spatial Requirements for Waller Creek District Plan Improvements  
The core Design Plan elements include a universally accessible trail, protection of the 100-year floodplain, stabilization of eroding streambanks, and restoration of riparian vegetation. This section presents property boundaries with Design Plan spatial requirements superimposed on top. There may be a range of tools (e.g. regulatory setbacks, easement acquisition, public/private collaboration) available to help secure the spatial requirements needed to

implement the planned improvements, and these alternatives will be presented in the final deliverable to Mayor and Council by August 31, 2025.

Figures 1a and 1b below depict the remaining Design Plan areas between 4th and 12th streets and show the parcels not on public property that will require various cooperative efforts with stakeholders to implement the planned improvements.

Figure 1a. Spatial Requirements for Waller Creek Design Plan Improvements (4th to 8th Streets)

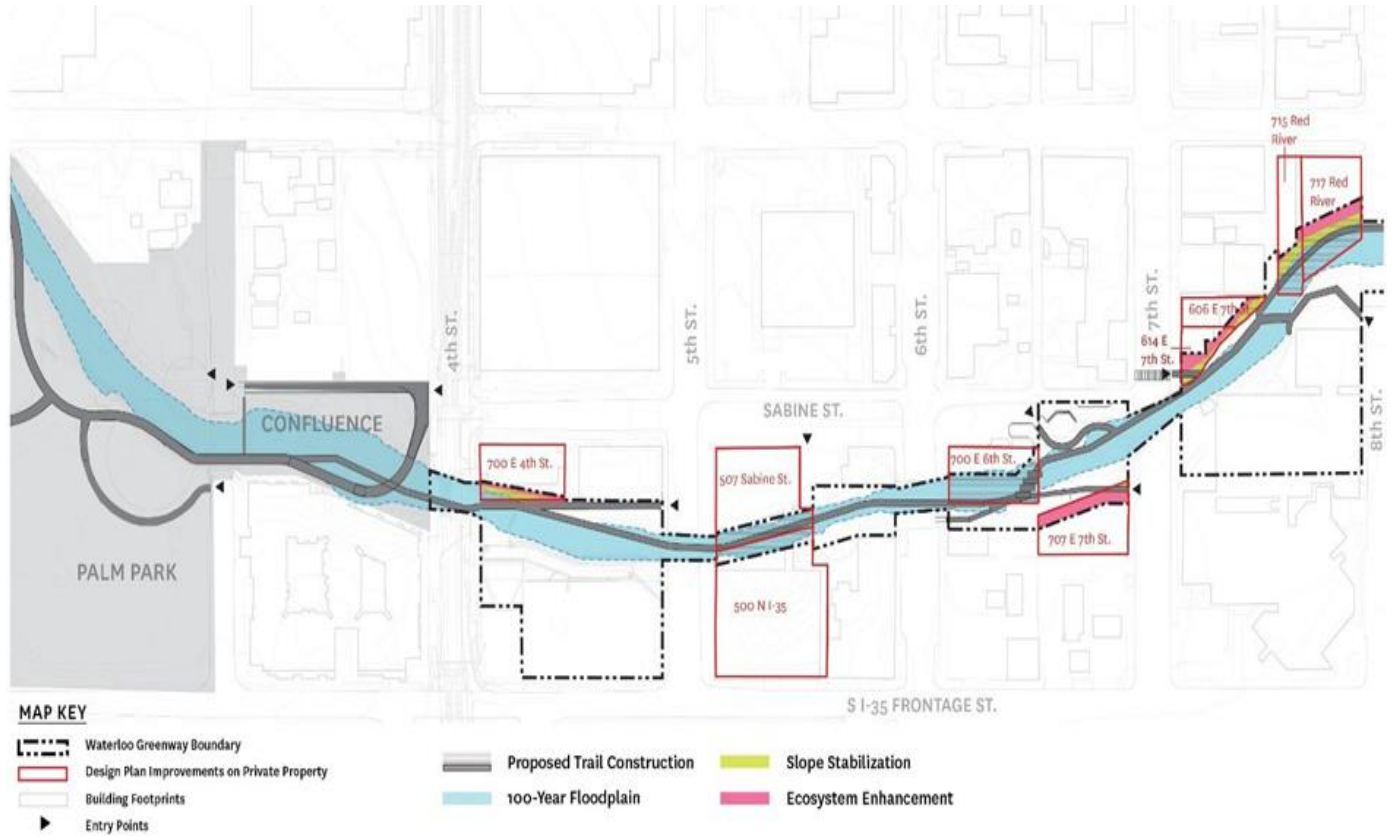
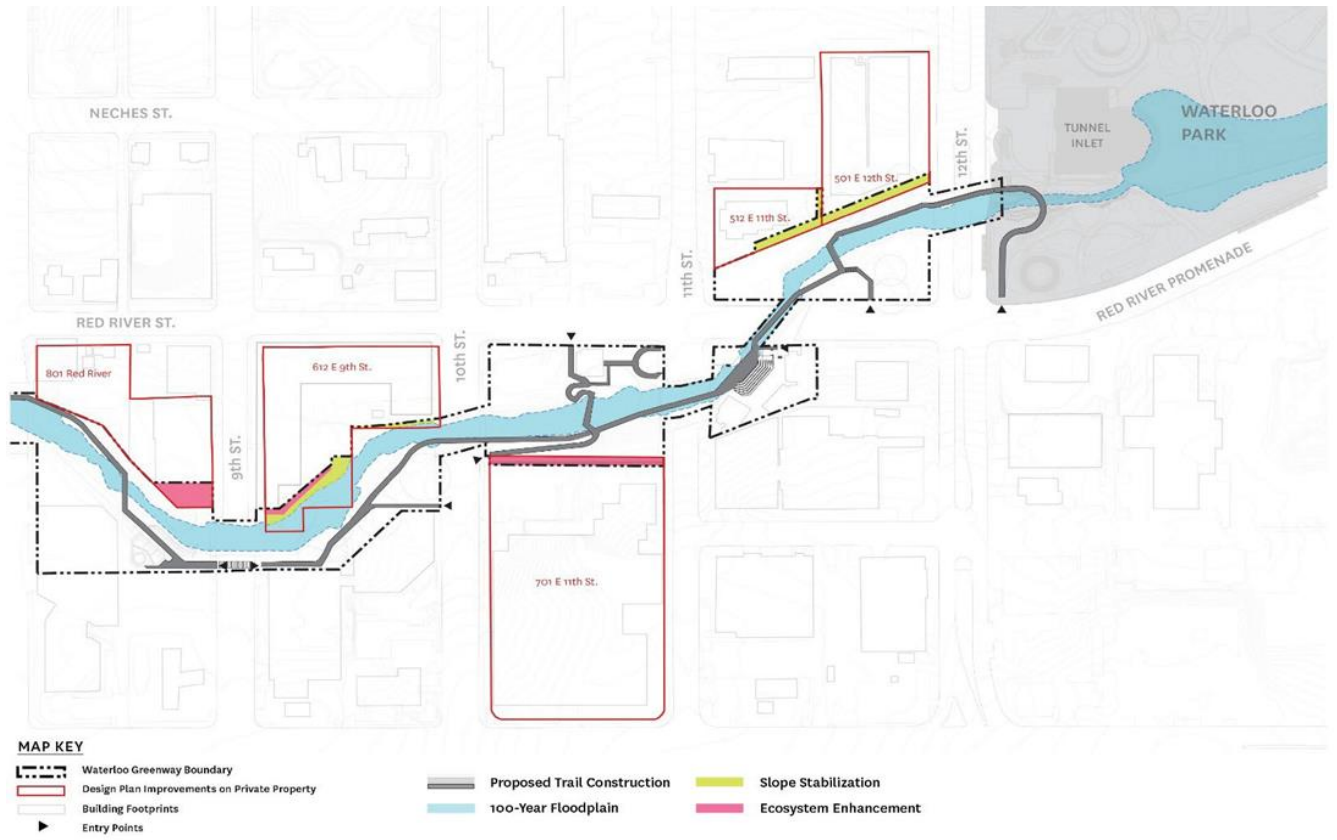


Figure 1b. Spatial Requirements for Waller Creek Design Plan Improvements (8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Streets)



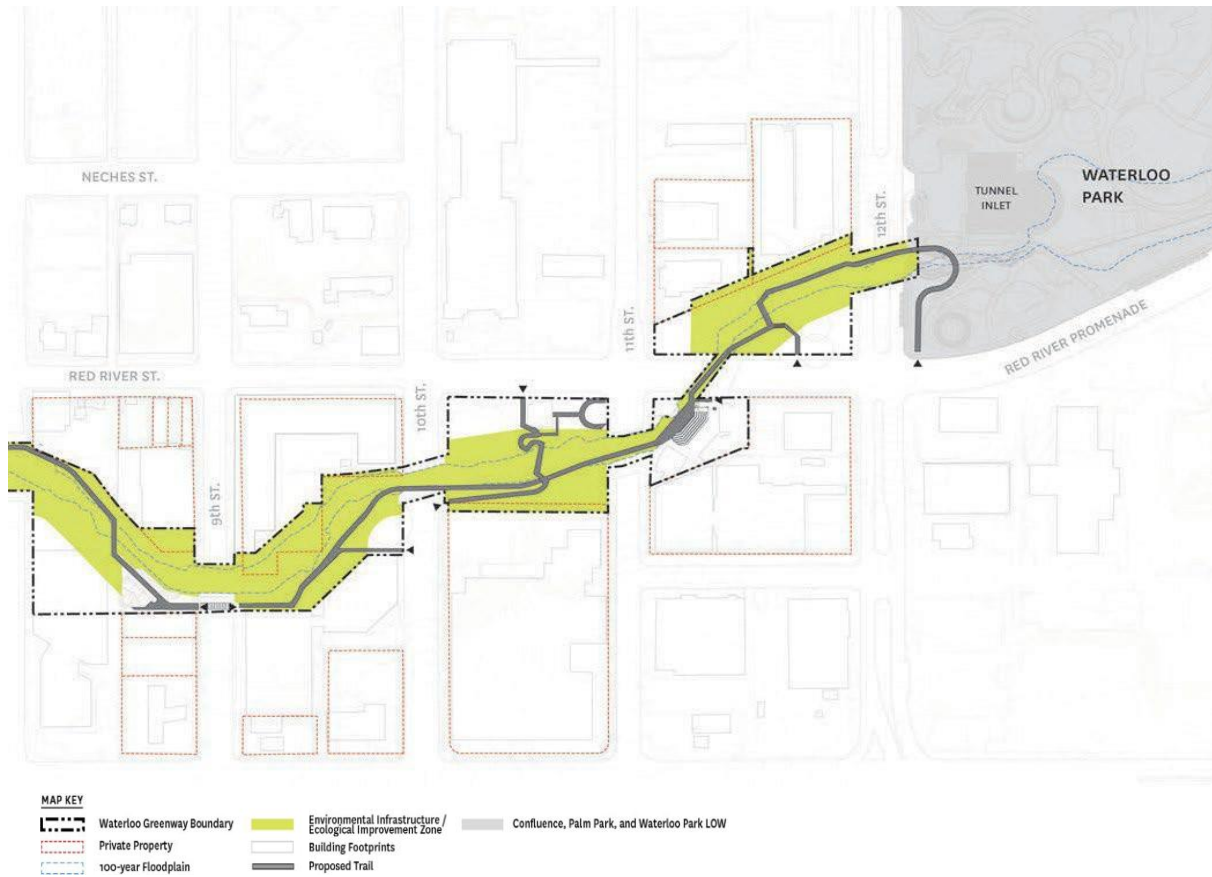
2. Quantification of Ecosystem Services for New Riparian Areas and Environmental Infrastructure  
 Figures 2a and 2b below display the extent of the ecological improvements that are planned. Similar enhancements have already been constructed in the Confluence and Waterloo Park segments of the Waller Creek District. Sixty-five percent of Waterloo Greenway is classified as Environmental Infrastructure/Ecological Improvement Zone (EI/EIZ). This zone creates improved ecological services for six acres of the Waller Creek Corridor that help downtown Austin address environmental issues including mitigating urban heat island effect, building resilient habitat, improving water quality, sustaining wildlife, and stabilizing excessive stream erosion.

The Environmental Infrastructure/Ecological Improvement Zone along 4th to 12th Streets creates improved ecological services by increasing all functional assessment parameters by two points from the City of Austin assessment completed in 2015. Two-point improvements in functional assessment scores translate to: 40% increase in riparian vegetation, 50% decrease in soil compaction, 40% decrease in active erosion, and a 40% increase in aquatic habitat. Fair and Good assessments will become Excellent, while Poor conditions will reach a minimum level of Good.

Figures 2a. Extent of New and Restored Environmental Infrastructure from 4th to 8th Streets



Figure 2b. Extent of New and Restored Environmental Infrastructure from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Streets



3. Maps Showing the Waterloo Greenway Design Plan and Spatial Requirements considering the Existing Cultural and Economic Resources

The Waller Creek District Design Plan connects cultural, historic, and economic assets along the corridor. Figures 3a and 3b below highlight previously established economic districts and cultural assets along Waller Creek with the anticipated spatial requirements for design plan implementation indicated by red polygons. The primary impacts of plan implementation are focused between 7th and 10th streets. Significant stream erosion and limited public property and/or easements will require collaborative approaches to safeguard music venues on Red River between 7th and 8th streets and allow sufficient space to connect to the hike and bike trail.

Figure 3a. Significant Cultural, Economic Resources, and Spatial Needs along Waller Creek (Lady Bird Lake to 7th Street)

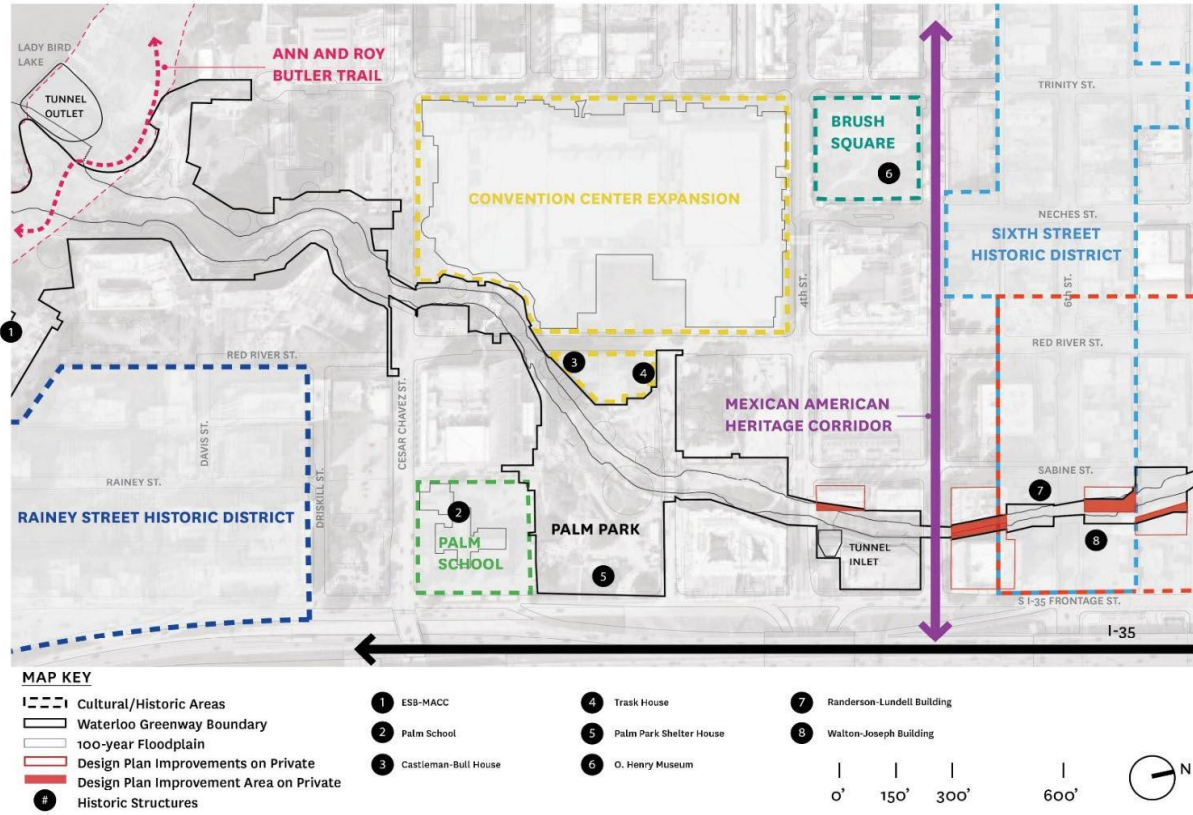
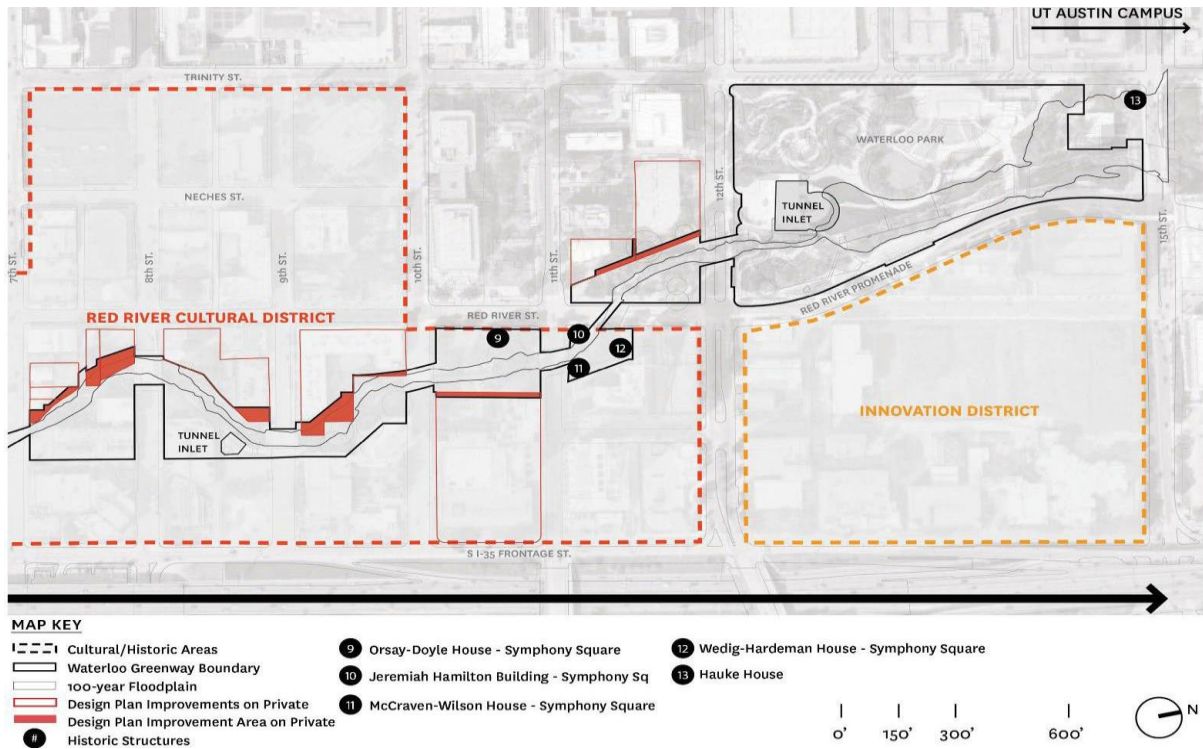


Figure 3b. Cultural, Economic Resources, and Spatial Needs along Waller Creek (7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Street)



Staff anticipates providing a final response to Mayor and Council by Fall 2025. Should you have any questions, please contact Watershed Protection Department Director Jorge Morales at [jorge.morales@austintexas.gov](mailto:jorge.morales@austintexas.gov) or 512-974-3438 or Assistance Director Janae Spence at [janae.spence@austintexas.gov](mailto:janae.spence@austintexas.gov) or 512-974-6591.

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