3. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

In looking toward the future, a number of key principles were formulated to guide the planning and design of the creek corridor and district. These were discussed and received enthusiastic community support at the Town Hall meeting in May 2009.

1. Enhance the ecological, hydrological and open space value of the creek corridor.

2. Create an interwoven web of appropriately scaled pedestrian and bicycle linkages to, across and along the creek corridor that connect Lady Bird Lake with UT, and East Austin and Rainey Street with the Downtown.

3. Promote development activity and investment along the creek and throughout the district.

The following sections of the plan are organized around the three principles identified above and expand on each in turn.

Enhance the ecological, hydrological and open space value of the creek corridor.

Environmental and Ecological Restoration

From an urban perspective, the restoration of the riparian landscape along the length of Waller Creek is of the highest priority and will have the most profound effect on its identity and amenity within the city. Waller Creek is an urban stream that reflects the urbanized character of its watershed and has over time, been affected by erosion and sedimentation, channelization, flooding, and degraded water quality. Despite the stresses that it has endured, it is a natural element with the resilience necessary to sustain and enrich life and contribute to urban and environmental quality.

Restoration of the creek channel involves a number of surface improvements to allow water to flow more effectively and to provide for improved environmental quality. Concrete paths resting directly on the creek floor are proposed to be removed to liberate the natural creek flow from these obstructions. Low-lying creekside landscaped “benches” capable of periodic inundation would be incorporated along a number of reaches. These benches would emulate the natural terraces found at the edges of creeks and would support a greater diversity of plant and animal life and help to filter, cleanse and slow down storm discharges, to the greater benefit of the larger ecology of the city. The flood benches, properly designed, could also help to contain the base flow within a more confined channel, and thus heighten the sense of running water and a more active and lively creek flow. No deepening or cutting of the creek bed would be permitted, but some pools of deeper water will be protected as they contribute to the varied character of the creek.

Rich alluvial soils are a significant asset within any creek corridor, and Waller Creek is no exception. But, as urbanization has taken place the creek has had to work harder to transport water and its sediment load within increasing confinement. As a result, the creek is wider today than it was historically. The channel bed has been scoured in some areas, revealing limestone beds. In the downstream reaches, the stream banks are heavily eroded, exposing tree roots and storm drains to view. In these areas, there is the need to stabilize the slopes and prevent the further loss of alluvial soils and existing landscape and mature trees. A careful reconfiguration of steep and eroding creek banks with more gentle slopes and stepped terraces would not only provide greater stability but would also provide opportunities for new plantings of trees as well as under-canopy vegetation. These erosion control measures can be undertaken in an artful way utilizing natural materials, such as large stones and boulders, as well as matting and wattling to retain the earth.

Riparian planting, more than any other feature, reveals the presence of water in the landscape. An experienced eye can detect how much water is present by what kinds of plants are found along a creek or pond. Common plants within this plant community include rushes, willows and cypresses at the water’s edge or in the water itself, transitioning to species such as such as elderberry, dogwood, baccharis, pecan, sycamore and bald cypress as well as other plants in upland locations. The integrity of a riparian corridor can be similarly discerned by the composition, maturity and density of plants and the number of “exotics” in the landscape.

The landscape aesthetic represented by riparian plantings is different from what would ordinarily be found in parks, streets and other public spaces in the city. The riparian landscape is a naturally sustaining planting that gains order, diversity and complexity out of a combination of natural factors, primarily having to do with the periodic presence of water. Rather than being a groomed and manicured planting of irrigated greens or comprising a more formal composition of trees, the riparian landscape is a distinctive mix of riparian and other native and locally adapted trees, grasses and woody species that grow in thickets. They only offer cover, sustenance, nesting areas and corridors of movement for birds and other wildlife. In addition, these riparian landscapes can transition from the more natural settings adjacent to the creek to upland urban landscapes, public and private spaces as part of development projects and park settings to provide a rich source of visual interest and amenity for urban dwellers.

The restoration of native riparian landscape along the restored banks of the creek and on new benches and terraces even in the most channelized reaches, is an important step in bringing nature back into the city and fostering sustainability. Introducing riparian plantings, where possible, along the entire length of the creek corridor would punctuate the impor-
Riparian zones in Central Texas include a diverse collection of native grass and grass-like vegetation along the creek edge as well as shrubs, small trees and shade trees along the banks and in the floodplain. (Photo credit: Rusty Ray and www.hillcountryalliance.org)

Riparian Restoration Strategies

The most effective way to achieve a healthy riparian corridor is to maintain and/or restore the appropriate vegetation. Healthy riparian zones are critical landscape components as they provide many ecological services including wildlife habitat, water quality improvement, stream bank stability and aquifer recharge. Riparian zones in Central Texas include a diverse collection of native grass and grass-like vegetation along the creek edge as well as shrubs, small trees and shade trees along the banks and in the floodplain. Strategies for restoring the Waller Creek riparian corridor should focus on creating a rich composition of plant species that provides ecological services while also supporting human activity and interest.

The riparian restoration strategy for Waller Creek includes the preservation of native plants and trees as well as the revegetation with a diversity of riparian plants and species. The preserved, revegetated and restored vegetation should work together to create a composition that mirrors the dominant plant species, relative species abundance, canopy cover and other characteristic elements of native riparian plant communities along Central Texas creeks. More specifically, the strategies that are a part of the enhancement of the riparian landscape are as follows:

- **Native Plants and Tree Preservation.** Planting and preserving native trees and shrubs within the riparian corridor are vital activities in maintaining a riparian canopy, creating complex plant communities and providing erosion and sediment control in the earlier stages of the project. The Waller Creek corridor contains a mix of native vegetation and includes many high-quality, mature trees that contribute greatly to the overall character of the corridor. All native, healthy trees should be protected to the maximum extent possible, and such “protected trees” that are impractical to preserve in place should be relocated within the corridor, if possible. Additionally, special emphasis should be placed upon healthy native trees with trunks exceeding 24-inches in diameter. The City of Austin recognizes these superior trees as “heritage trees” and these trees are to be preserved.

- **Revegetation and Landscape Restoration.** The revegetation strategy should also focus on maintaining connectivity along the corridor, minimizing abrupt vegetative boundaries between adjacent land uses and creating vertical stratification of vegetation with the planting of herbs, grasses, shrubs, small trees and shade trees. Generally, the vegetative structure used at the corridor edge should be more diverse with a gradual transition from the interior conditions of the corridor. In addition, shading of the creek should be achieved by planting a mix of herbs, grasses, shrubs, small trees and shade trees along the corridor edge and a mix of herbs and grasses along the flood benches.

- **Removal of Invasive Plant Species.** Invasive plant species degrade a riparian zone by creating competition for native plants and reducing the wildlife habitat along the corridor. Invasive species are prevalent along Waller Creek and detract from the ecological integrity of the corridor. A corridor-wide management plan should be created for control and subsequent management of any plant species currently listed on the City of Austin’s Native and Adapted Landscape Plants Grow Green invasive plant list. The plan should include Integrated Pest Management protocols for identifying and monitoring for additional invasive species that may colonize the site, for initial treatment and for follow-up treatments and long-term control.
Today, within the Waller Creek District, there are approximately 18 acres of parkland, not including Lady Bird Lake Park at the mouth of the creek. (See Figure 1: Open Space and Pedestrian Activity Concept) This parkland has the potential of enhancing the creek corridor and, at the same time, creating a more livable environment for the surrounding district. The parks serve in some cases to extend and punctuate the open space created by a revitalized and environmentally restored creek channel. In other cases, they disappear unnoticed and are subsumed either by adjacent development or by the eroded banks of the creeksides. The parkland can contribute to the overall objectives for the creek corridor and for the district by extending the open space experience and providing a variety of recreational opportunities that will make the entire area a destination for all segments of the city’s population. To fully realize the potential of the parkland, a number of improvements must be considered. Parks and public space within the Waller Creek Corridor should be redeveloped and designed to meet the needs and interests of families with children and users of all ages.

Waterloo Park comprises more than half the total open space acreage on Waller Creek. The 10-acre park forms the northern gateway into the open space corridor, is planned to be improved as part of the Tunnel Project and will include the new inlet structure. In addition to the improvements that will be made by the Tunnel Project, Waterloo Park is currently the subject of a master-planning process that will identify other proposed improvements. The adjoining parkland just south of Waterloo Park can, to a great extent, be considered an extension of Waterloo Park and a part of the northern gateway experience. Together, the parcels to the south of Waterloo Park comprise 2.7 acres and include the triangular parcel of land just south of Twelfth Street and west of Red River as well as Symphony Square, featuring a 350-seat amphitheater, and Symphony Plaza Park which includes the historic Orsey-Doyle House. An important early-action improvement related to all three of these parcels is the improvement of the intersection at Eleventh Street and Red River to create an ADA accessible alternative to the highly constrained creekside trail. Concurrently, enhancements should be made to the existing trail to correct what may be seen as an uncomfortable and unsafe environment not only for those who use the pathways but also for those who attend performances at Symphony Square or are likely to use the adjacent parkland. As a result, the pathways beneath these two bridges should either be closed to public pedestrian and bike circulation, or be significantly upgraded with improved lighting, maintenance, and heightened security patrols. If closed to the public, the undercrossing beneath the Eleventh Street bridge could still be retained for use by Symphony Square and its amphitheater, which will continue to function as a performance space and destination. Further, the elimination of the connection under Red River Street would enable the fork in the pathway in the triangular parcel to the north to also be removed, opening up additional opportunities for creek side enhancements. In contrast to these two undercrossings, the connection under the Twelfth Street Bridge between Waterloo Park and the triangular parcel to the south is a strong linking element that strengthens the relationship between the two parks.

The Austin Symphony Orchestra holds a fifty-year lease at Symphony Square and has contributed greatly to improving this segment of the Waller Creek corridor. Not much is needed to improve Symphony Square
beyond the elimination and/or maintenance and management of the below grade connections. However, the surface parking lots currently used by the Austin Symphony Orchestra - across Red River Street to the west of Symphony Square and across 11th Street to the south of Symphony Square - do offer the promise of improvement. Located right next to the creek, these surface parking lots are not the best long-term use of creekside space. Subject to the needs of and the lease with the Symphony, the transformation of these parking lots could be achieved over the long-term if redevelopment on surrounding sites were to create convenient shared parking for the Symphony, thereby freeing up the existing surface parking lots to be re-purposed as parkland, which could be re-graded to create a series of stepped green terraces. These improvements would not only relate the parkland more directly to the creekside environment but would also enhance the potential for passive recreational opportunities, such as picnicking, sitting, or just enjoying the riparian setting.

At the southernmost end of Waller Creek is Lady Bird Lake Park, one of the best and most distinguished parks in the Downtown and City as a whole. The park is approximately 42 acres in size within Downtown and includes approximately 10 miles of hike/bike trails. It not only provides access for pedestrians and bicyclists to and around the lake but it has evolved to become one of the community’s most vibrant meeting places. The Tunnel Project has proposed a new outlet structure and a new boat-house close to the mouth of Waller Creek with associated improvements. From Waller Creek’s point of view, the preservation and enhancement of the relationship between Lady Bird Lake and its parkland and the creek corridor is one of the most important considerations. Today in the reach south of the Cesar Chavez Bridge, the Waller Creek corridor is approximately 220 feet wide and 1000 feet long. It is an uninterrupted stretch of land with mature vegetation that can be perceived as an extension of Lady Bird Lake Park. In the future, maintaining the spaciousness of the corridor, protecting the large trees, mitigating streambank erosion, creating linkages on both sides of the creek to the lake and enhancing the overall landscape and open space qualities are of paramount importance.

Situated between Waterloo Park and Lady Bird Lake is Palm Park, comprising 2.4 acres of land banking the eastern bank of Waller Creek between Second and Third Streets and extending to the IH 35 frontage road. Although Palm Park has great potential, it has not been improved or upgraded for many years and is not well used today. Improvements are needed to enable it to better serve as a recreational resource for neighborhoods to the east (for which it originally served), and other parts of the city. These improvements could establish a stronger and more complementary relationship to the creek, the Convention Center and the District as a whole, allow for new trail linkages, protect the large specimen trees and restore the riparian landscape. At the same time, they could also incorporate the use of water as a theme from an interpretative and educational perspective as well as for interactive recreation and children’s play and more fully engage the larger park in the process. As part of the park renovation efforts, the adjacent Palm School presents an opportunity to engage and reinforce the park, particularly if County services were to relocate or refigure, and be replaced or augmented with complementary community, cultural and educational activities.

In addition to these larger open spaces, there are also a number of smaller pieces of parkland that can be enhanced to create stronger continuity and activity within the open space corridor. They include two triangular parcels between Tenth and Eighth Streets which together contribute about 8,200 square feet of parkland within the creek corridor, approximately 0.7 acres of some small portions of parkland which are included within the creek corridor and the adjacent terraced banks between Seventh and Fifth Streets, an 8,700 square foot parcel of land between the Red River Bridge and the Cesar Chavez Street Bridge, a portion of which is also within the creek corridor. These small pieces create opportunity for riparian landscaping in the tightest portion of the corridor but at the same time they could also be used for outdoor dining or other activities under the shade of the trees and provide a source of revenue to the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) or as a catalyst for adjacent uses.

There is also one major opportunity to create a new recreation and open space destination within the corridor in the long-term future. This is located on City-owned property currently occupied by Austin Police Department (APD) buildings and parking structures at the bend of Waller Creek between Ninth and Seventh Streets. These parcels are large enough so that as redevelopment of these parcels occurs and is encouraged to take place over the long term, portions can be reserved to create a significant amount of parkland that would enhance the creek experience, extend the open space qualities of Sabine Street, provide another significant recreational destination and node of activity and punctuate the natural form.
of the creek corridor. Even with the expanded parkland, the area will still retain significant redevelopment potential.

Create an interwoven web of appropriately-scaled pedestrian and bicycle linkages to, across and along the creek.

**Streets as Public Spaces**

With its Great Streets Program, Austin has recognized the role of streets to be more than that of moving vehicular traffic and their importance as multi-use corridors that serve as part of the open space system of the city. Streets provide light, air, greenery and landscape as well as space for the sociable engagement of the population. In addition, streets serve to organize adjacent development into reasonably scaled blocks that create connectivity between different parts of the city. In some cases, large assembled parcels, such as the Convention Center, may be needed for the function they serve but at the same time they create large unbroken blocks which diminish connectivity, linkage and scale. Cities with a finer grain pattern of blocks created by perimeter streets and punctuated by alleys are recognized for making a more pedestrian oriented pattern and integrating the public and private realms in a way that provides for a more vibrant and interesting place.

Within the Waller Creek District, there are a few streets that need to be extended and completed in order to perform the important functions identified above. These include Sabine Street between Fourth and Third Streets and between Second and Driskill Streets as well as Second Street from Red River to the IH 35 frontage road. Together these streets will complete the pattern of unfinished blocks east of the Convention Center and help to create better linkages, continuity and a human scale to the adjacent environment. Extending Sabine Street in this way will help connect the Rainey District to the Waller Creek District and the rest of Downtown. These street linkages will also enhance the opportunities for adjacent development by not only providing access but also helping to create more appropriate frontages for future uses.

There are also other potential improvements to the street system within the district that will enhance its open space qualities. All of the east/west cross streets within the district are already proposed to be improved to the Great Streets standards as part of the Downtown Plan. This would include widening sidewalks, creating continuous street trees and thus enhancing the landscape and open space qualities of the streets. In the north/south direction, Red River Street needs to also be enhanced in a similar manner as the cross-streets.

By far, the greatest opportunity within the Waller Creek District is Sabine Street. Sabine Street parallels the west side of the creek corridor and with its proposed extension will connect the district from Seventh to Third Streets. (See Figure 2: Illustrative Plan - Third to Seventh Streets) There is sufficient space within the 80-foot of right-of-way to allow the street to be rebalanced, with 70% utilized for landscaping and improved open space. A richly landscaped environment with a triple row of trees (two rows on one side and one row on the other), a wide pedestrian promenade and space for outdoor cafes and seating can extend the sense of the landscape and open space character of the corridor. (See Sections 10-16) Further, it

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**FIGURE 2: ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN - THIRD TO SEVENTH STREETS**

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can help to create a more sociable and attractive setting for the public life of the city which in turn can become a catalyst for the revitalization of the area as a mixed use district, housing cultural, creative and entertainment uses tied to East Sixth Street.

Sabine Street also offers the opportunity to in effect broaden the boundaries of the creek corridor within its most constrained reaches. The buildings that are currently located on very small parcels can be brought into a larger landscaped island setting, where they will have two positive frontages – one facing the creek and the other facing the landscaped promenade space along Sabine Street. In addition to Sabine Street, the mid-block alley remnants in the portion of the creek corridor between Seventh and Fourth Streets can play a significant role in creating a smaller scale network of linkages that will increase variety and interest of the pedestrian experience. These can be extended further to bridge over the creek thus interconnecting both banks of the corridor and linking them more closely to Sabine Street.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Linkage

Pedestrian and bicycle movement serves not only as a form of transportation but also as a significant component of the recreational experience of the city. In fact, bicycling, walking, jogging, strolling are the fastest growing and most preferred recreational activities in urban areas today. From this standpoint, the connection of the Waller Creek District to the existing system of trails along Lady Bird Lake is one of the most critical objectives of the enhancement program. It is also important to recognize that the quality of pedestrian and bicycle movement and the opportunity for multiple and interesting destinations along the route are of equal or even greater importance than the establishment of a continuous single corridor of movement.

Any movement system must be planned in consideration of its fit with the environment that it is intended to traverse and connect. A critical consideration is the scale of the movement system relative to its context and the desire to create a way of moving through an area without diminishing the quality of the experience nor the value to adjacent uses. There are reaches of the Waller Creek corridor that are severely constrained in size. In general, most of the corridor is no wider than the average Downtown street, and is significantly narrower in several locations. Creating a continuous path of movement within the creek channel is not feasible due to low-lying bridge structures. But, also, in many cases, would not be desirable because it would seriously compromise other values for the creek corridor and degrade the quality of the environment and the experience of moving through the landscape.

Linkages within the district need to be integrated into the urban pattern in a way that will add to the amenity value of the creek and its potential for ecological enhancement and public-oriented activities. Pedestrian and bicycle movement should contribute positively to redevelopment, complement the identity of the creek corridor and extend the vitality and enjoyment of the district. As a result, the plan proposes connectivity through multiple paths of movement, both within the creek corridor and on city streets, in an interconnected and looped system. The concept combines movement within the corridor with movement along adjacent streets and it includes at grade crossings at intersecting streets with below-grade movement under some of the bridges. This interconnected system would not diminish the quality of the experience for pedestrians and bicyclists but rather enrich the experience by diversity and complexity and its engagement with the surrounding environment. In this way it would become a more observable and integrated part of the larger urban experience of the Downtown and the City, rather than an isolated and separated experience from the daily urban life. (See Figure 3: Bike-Pedestrian Circulation Concept)

The improvement and extension of Sabine Street is key to the improvement of the pedestrian and bicycle connections through the Waller Creek District. The street would be redesigned to take on a new role within the city, extending all the way from Seventh Street to Third Street where it would branch within Palm Park to provide direct access along two routes to the Lady Bird Lake Trails and other recreational and cultural activities. One of these routes would extend Sabine Street to Driskill Street through a new signalized intersection at Cesar Chavez and would proceed at grade to the lake, or to River Street which provides a safe linkage beneath IH 35 to East Austin. This route would also connect with the trail on the east bank of Waller Creek via Driskill and Davis Streets. The Davis Street connection would be achieved through an easement on private property and the Driskill Street connection would be integrated with the future development of that private property.
FIGURE 3: BIKE-PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION CONCEPT

- Pathways with a light touch through the landscape
- Sometimes a light bridge structure is required
- Bicycle and pedestrian friendly streets can be part of the system.

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Sometimes a light bridge structure is required. Pathways with a light touch through the landscape. Bicycle and pedestrian friendly streets can be part of the system.
At Sabine and Third Streets, the westerly fork of the bicycle/pedestrian route would proceed within the creek corridor on an elevated boardwalk bridge-like structure under the Red River and Cesar Chavez Bridges to connect to the existing creekside trail leading to Lady Bird Lake. (See Sections 20-23) This boardwalk is envisioned as a delicate structure of wood and steel, lightly passing through the creek corridor with minimal disruption to the landscape. As the project progresses into the implementation phase, the City will explore another point of connection to the street could be made within the parkland north of the Ironworks BBQ. (See Figure 4: Park Terrace and Ramp Option)

At the northerly end of the Sabine Street bike/pedestrian corridor, pedestrians and bicyclists would cross Seventh Street at a signalized intersection and descend into the lower elevations on the eastern side of the creek. In addition to the at grade crossing of Seventh Street, the City may consider retaining the existing under-bridge passage (which will remain susceptible to flooding) or construct an elevated boardwalk under the center of the bridge span. (See Figure 5: Seventh Streets: Underpass Trail Option) Users then would pass under the Eighth Street Bridge and then back up to cross Ninth Street at a new mid-block crossing. The trail would continue along the east side of the creek and descend under the Tenth Street Bridge and then ascend to the intersection of Eleventh and Red River where it would cross at grade or underneath the bridges and proceed northward under the Twelfth Street Bridge to Waterloo Park and to Red River Street beyond. This would constitute the principal proposed recreational pedestrian/bicycle movement corridor for the Waller Creek District, an accessible pathway of more than one mile in length.

This corridor would be complemented by a parallel but more direct route for bicycle movement along Red River Street, which would extend all the way from UT to Lady Bird Lake. These two north/south movement corridors would be interconnected with the proposed Lance Armstrong Bikeway on Fourth Street and the bike lanes on Eleventh Street, as well as the “sharrows” proposed for many of the other cross-streets.

Design Parameters for Public Spaces

At a more specific and detailed level, the proposed improvements within the creek corridor should be designed to advance best practices of ecological design. They should protect, restore and stabilize the banks and...
bottom of the creek, improve water quality and flow and preserve and reintroduce riparian vegetation at many levels, to create a very rich landscaped environment. Paths, trails and pedestrian bridges should traverse the creek landscape lightly, revealing a succession of unique natural features - cretaceous limestone outcrops, distinctive riparian vegetation, meanders, riffles and pools, as well as historic stone bridges, stone walls and buildings that line the creek. Lighting should create an attractive night-time scenic quality with dramatic but subtle effects that heighten our awareness and comfort, encourage uses and activities that spill into outdoor spaces thus contributing to their sociability and vitality. Over time, as part of larger City improvements, plans should be implemented to remove the pipes slung under the bridges. The remains of aging, obsolete or failed infrastructure projects should also be removed along with structures built into the bed of the creek including concrete, plaster and other materials that have sloughed off into the channel.

The plan recommends that the new walkway systems be built to accessibility standards and for protection against flooding. New walkways should be built above the 100-year flood level wherever possible, and eight feet of overhead clearance is preferred while 80" is required below the bridges. In some cases, in order to achieve an adequate clearance portions of trails may be required to descend below the flood level for a short stretch. In these cases, the City may decide to let them be inundated on occasion and provide convenient alternative routes. Alternatively, low walls may be used to protect the trail against flooding. Currently, some portions of the creek-side trail (such as the 12th Street Bridge) are already adjoined by a low wall or curb which, presumably, provides some protection from flooding. Where walls need to be raised or added for flood protection, (for instance, at 12th Street and 10th Street), sump pumps should be provided for storm water evacuation and wash-down.

For the most part, all walkways along the creek should be designed so that they have a slope of less than five percent, for more gentle and gradual transitions between lower areas adjacent to the water and upper areas within the City. Gradual and stepped side slopes should be encouraged to minimize abrupt changes in grade of over 30 inches and the need for guardrails. Stairs should also be minimized with a greater emphasis on more natural changes in grade, integrated with the topographic structure of the creek. The use of shallow slopes (i.e., less than five percent) should be implemented on the walkways to avoid the need for ramps and landings as well as guardrails and handrails and to create a more open and attractive environment for movement.

All pedestrian priority trails should be signed and posted. However, walkways that accommodate both bicycles and pedestrians should have a minimum 12 feet clear width and guardrails, where necessary, should be at least 54 inches high. Pedestrian trails should be at least eight feet wide and should avoid the need for guardrails with sloped banks, but if needed should be a minimum of 42 inches in height. All guardrails should be a minimalist design with members as thin and transparent as possible so as not to overly intrude into the larger riparian landscape of the creek. The mid-block pedestrian bridges between Third and Seventh Streets should be 6-feet wide with 42-inch guard rails.

In some places, boardwalks are proposed as a light structural element in order to minimize disruption of existing creek banks and vegetation. These structures are envisioned as artistic elements within the riparian landscape. The surfaces of the boardwalk, as with all of the trails, should be non-slip and, to further their transparency, be comprised of narrow slats utilizing materials that are both durable and sustainable. Any supporting structures should be designed to minimize the number and size of columns and these should be placed centrally under the deck so as to maintain the light appearance of the boardwalk structure.

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From a development standpoint, the district offers a wide variety of opportunities. From a regulatory perspective, the size and scale of future projects are most significantly affected by the Capitol View Corridor (CVC) height limitations. These restrictions will help to foster a diversity of building types and scales of future development which will add to the interest and attractiveness of the area as well as the opportunities for investment. In addition to the large number of private development opportunities, there are also significant publicly-owned parcels, like the Police Department, which have turned their backs to the creek corridor and can be redeveloped in the larger public interest. The diversity of development opportunities – small and large, public and private, will help to create a more economically viable district, by allowing a wide range of investors to participate in the area’s transformation.

In the preparation of the Master Plan, the maximum development capacity of the Waller Creek Increment Financing (TIF) District was projected by analyzing and modeling each of the opportunity sites greater than one-quarter block in area. (The TIF area extends beyond the Waller Creek District planning area to include much of the Rainey Street District to the south. (See Figure 6: TIF District and Opportunity Sites and Appendix A: Projected Development Capacity on Opportunity Sites) This projection indicates that the opportunity sites could yield up to 11.4 million square feet on public and privately owned land, or an overall average Floor Area Ratio of 9:1. A total of 9.5 million square feet of development is projected on privately-owned sites or an overall average FAR of 10:1. As shown on the sketch model (see Figure 13), this projection takes into consideration the limitations of the Capitol View Corridors and assumes some increased density achieved, beyond base zoning maximums. It is important to note that these projections describe only the estimated development capacity of the site and do not necessarily represent what the real estate market may actually produce or what an individual property owner may decide to do with a property.

From a land use standpoint, residential, hospitality and smaller scale commercial, uses, represent three of the most significant development opportunities within the area. (See Figure 7: Land Use and Develop-
ment Concept) Beyond these are opportunities for small-scale offices and creative businesses which may want to own their own property and have a more distinctive and individualized identity. Live/work lofts and townhouse units that combine residential and commercial activity could also be developed on the many small sites constrained by the CVCs within the area. In some cases, there are also opportunities for smaller scale buildings with ground level retail, restaurant and entertainment uses, with upper level rental office and/or residential uses for those seeking more of a vibrant and publicly oriented environment in which to live and work. In all cases, regardless of the upper story uses, active ground level uses are desired to create activity and a more vibrant district, as well as greater social sustainability adjacent to the creek corridor.

Residential uses would be of benefit to the district in bringing a larger population into the area and establishing a sense of neighborhood. In recognition of the City’s commitment to becoming the most family friendly city in the country, opportunities for creating housing designed for families with children should be pursued. Residential uses can take advantage of the

proximity to the open spaces within the corridor and the activities planned within the parks and open air dining along the creek. There are excellent opportunities for housing of a variety of types and scales and appealing to different income groups as well. Large scale, high rise residential development opportunities (above 120 feet in height) exist at either end of the district – both to the south of Palm Park along both sides of Waller Creek, and to the north, between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets adjacent to Symphony Square and Brackenridge Hospital.

Mid-rise residential opportunities (up to 120 feet in height) exist on the east side of the corridor between Seventh and Ninth Street, on the Austin Police Department properties. These sites are large enough to enable any future redevelopment to be implemented in a garden-like setting that both benefits from the amenity value of the creek corridor and extends it into the development itself. Low-rise residential development opportunity sites (below 60 feet in height) including the possibility of live/work projects exist on the east side of the creek corridor, between Third and Seventh Streets.

The half-block between Third and Fourth Streets and between Red River and the Sabine Street extension across from the Convention Center garage would be an excellent site for an additional hotel within the district. It is catty-corner from the existing Hilton Hotel and adjacent to the future recreational and open space improvement of Palm Park. Alternatively, this site and its relationship to the Fourth Street passenger rail could also become an excellent site for residential high-rise development. The site is large enough that these two uses could be integrated in a way that would be beneficial for both.

It is envisioned that small scale commercial uses would be focused primarily on both sides of the creek corridor and along Sabine Street between Third and Seventh Streets and on the west side of the creek corridor to Red River between Seventh and Ninth Streets. One of these blocks is currently the location of Stubb’s, a popular live music venue in the renowned Red River live music district. In addition the blocks between Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Streets between Sabine Street and Red River offer additional opportunities for the small scale “creative community” business and live/
work opportunities which could help to link the Sixth Street Entertainment District to the Waller Creek/Sabine Street area. These lower-rise developments under the CVCs have the potential to be more affordable as they could be “stick-framed”, rather than the more expensive steel and concrete construction required for mid and high-rise buildings.

Significant consideration must be given to creating public parking, particularly in the central portion of the creek corridor in order to maintain the fine grain and intimate scale of activities within smaller parcels. Parcels smaller than one-quarter block cannot realistically provide on-site structured parking. A shared parking facility could be located within future development on the parcels east of Symphony Square between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets, where it could provide for the smaller-scaled parcels along the creek corridor and an anchor destination for vehicles arrival into the district. Additional public parking should also be located in the area between Fifth and Seventh Streets, utilizing the City’s Parking Enterprise, to provide a more centralized facility for the commercial, recreational and entertainment uses along the creek corridor, Sabine Street and Sixth Street.

Waller Creek District and Creative Community

In its initiatives and policies related to the “Creative Community”, the Downtown Plan calls for the Waller Creek District to be the key Downtown district identified with the creative community. The district is envisioned as a place for artists of all kinds to practice (studios, performance spaces, etc.), a place where creative support industries may be found, and even a place where artists and individuals involved in creative industries can live affordably. The nationally-renowned, cutting-edge live music scene on Red River plays a major role in incubating and developing young local artists and creates substantial economic opportunities for the City, local businesses, and local artists. The nationally-renowned, cutting-edge live music scene on Red River plays a major role in incubating and developing young local artists and creates substantial economic opportunities for the City, local businesses, and local artists. The Red River live music should be protected and strategies developed for retaining these venues, while the city simultaneously works to develop new music ‘ecosystems’ or ‘colonies’ in Austin. Relocation strategies and incentive for displaced venues should be included as well. Since a clear solution has yet to be determined, individuals should be assigned to investigate and develop the most viable options available to support a long term strategy and work in tandem with Waller Creek project leaders to make sure that they happen. As the implementation of this plan begins to take place, stakeholders from within the Red River district and music community should be included in ongoing dialogue and implementation of these strategies to help ensure accountability. Waller Creek is not only Austin’s opportunity to create a highly unique creek corridor and trail system, but incentivizing it as “home” to Austin’s creative community will help to give this emerging district an authentic Austin flavor, and it will make a strong statement to both residents and visitors about the importance of the creative community in our city.

Various elements of the draft Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) contain recommendations that may bolster the interests of the live music community in and around Downtown, including: “Strategies and Policies to Sustain and Enhance Austin’s Creative Culture”, “Downtown Density Bonus Program”, “Downtown Affordable Housing Strategy”, “Downtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan”, and the “Downtown Core/Waterfront District Plan”. The Waller Creek District Master Plan (WCDMP) endorses and supports these recommendations. If and when these recommendations are adopted by City Council, they should guide the implementation of the WCDMP. In addition, as the WCDMP moves into implementation city staff should work with stakeholders, including the Austin Music Commission, to refine, enhance, and implement these strategies and consider additional avenues to maintain the ecosystem of music-related businesses on Red River.

Further, the public trail and creek improvement project provides an opportunity to engage the creative community at a number of levels: in the design of public art and public spaces that could be located along or near the pathways and in developing designs for the various functional elements of the public improvement project, such as small bridges, guardrails, water fountains, bike racks, benches, etc. In addition, artists should be commissioned to enliven the creek corridor with live music, dance, performance, poetry readings, outdoor art classes, etc., that could begin today, not needing to wait for the completion of the public trail improvement project.

The City’s Art in Public Places Program requires a two percent contribution from most, above-ground (visible) public projects, so substantial funding would be dedicated from the public improvement project budget to create permanent “artworks”. It is recommended that artists are included as key members of the architectural design team hired by the City to do the final design and engineering for the improvement project, so the artists’ contributions are as integrated as possible in the overall design of the project.
Historic buildings offer new opportunities

Build on the character of unique businesses

Businesses that cater to daytime activities

Small scale hospitality or residential buildings

Opportunities exist for artists to be involved in designing functional elements

Restaurants add to the vitality of public life