

89-01-267

TOWN  
LAKE  
PARK

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

EXHIBIT "A"

## **Austin City Council**

**Frank C. Cooksey**  
Mayer

**John Trevino, Jr.**  
Mayer Pro Tem

**Council Members**  
Max Nofziger  
Smoot Carl-Mitchell  
Sally Shipman  
George Humphrey  
Charles E. Urdy

**John Ware**  
Acting City Manager

**Libby Watson**  
Assistant City Manager

**Charles Jordan**  
Director, Parks and Recreation Department

A report of a study conducted by:  
**Johnson, Johnson & Roy/inc.**

and

**Lawrence W. Speck Associates, Inc.**  
with

**Glass Environmental Consultants, Inc.**  
**Halcyon Ltd.**

**Project for Public Spaces, Inc.**  
**Dr. Sandra Rosenbloom**

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# TOWN LAKE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Baseline Situation</b> .....	7
Land Use .....	7
Natural Features .....	10
Visual Features .....	13
Park Character .....	13
Park Use .....	15
Water Quality and Hydrology .....	18
Transportation Issues .....	20
Economic Stakeholder Analysis .....	23
Conclusion .....	26
<b>Plan Concept</b> .....	28
A Vision for Town Lake Park .....	28
Five Park Types .....	29
Parkland Expansions .....	35
Land Use .....	38
Urban Design .....	40
<b>Plan Description</b> .....	43
MOPAC to Drake Bridge	
South Shore: An Overview .....	43
Austin Nature Center and Zilker Botanical Garden .....	48
McBeth Recreation Center .....	50
Central Zilker .....	50
Barton Springs Pool Area .....	52
The Pecan Gardens .....	55
Auditorium Shores .....	58
North Shore: Lamar Boulevard to Shoal Creek .....	65
West Austin and Lamar Beach .....	65
Drake Bridge to Interstate 35	
South Shore: Drake Bridge to E. Bouldin Creek .....	67
Twin Creeks Park .....	69

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The Norwood Estate .....	69	
North Shore: Rainey Street Area .....	70	
The Urban Waterfront .....	71	
 Interstate 35 to The Basin		
South Shore .....	75	
The Basin .....	75	
North Shore: Festival Beach/Fiesta Gardens .....	77	
 Longhorn Dam to Montopolis Bridge		
Colorado River Park/Krieg Field .....	81	
The East Preserve .....	87	
 Tom Miller Dam to MOPAC		
Eilers Park/Deep Eddy .....	87	
The West Preserve .....	89	
 Circulation .....	 91	
 <b>Implementation Program</b> .....		<b>95</b>
Organizational Structure .....	96	
Funding Programs .....	98	
Phasing .....	105	
 <b>References</b> .....	 <b>109</b>	

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## TOWN LAKE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Preparation of the "Town Lake Comprehensive Plan" would not have been possible without the cooperation and assistance of many. It is very much a product of teamwork and reflects contributions made by many departments, agencies, business organizations, neighborhood associations, groups and individuals through sector meetings, neighborhood discussions, organizational meetings, individual conversations and public meetings. While it is infeasible to list all of them here, the Consultant Team wishes to recognize the AustinPlan sectors within the Corridor, the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board, the Downtown Commission, and the neighborhood associations who gave considerable time and effort to the Plan's preparation and review.

We wish to express special thanks to the Parks and Recreation Department, its Board, Director, Staff and the Town Lake Coordinator for their invaluable guidance and patient cooperation throughout the entire study process.

Johnson Johnson & Roy/inc.

Lawrence W. Speck Associates

5 December 1987

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## INTRODUCTION

The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan is a continuation of a longstanding effort on the part of the citizens of Austin to enhance and develop scenic parks and waterways in the heart of their city. This planning effort is intended to extend the insightful and successful visions of many generations of Austinites who have seen the Colorado River and Town Lake as a powerful nurturing feature for the city.

The site of Austin was selected in 1839 for its "front upon the Colorado River". The Edwin Waller plan which followed that selection oriented the city strongly to the river, with the spine of Congress Avenue linking the Capitol on its hill above with the scenic and important river below. Austin's identity as the "River City" acknowledges the importance of this physical symbol to the life of the community. Yet, because the Colorado is unnavigable, Austin's utilization of the river has never been commercially oriented. The river's prime attractions have always been scenic.

For more than half a century Austinites have invested an impressive quantity of energy and resources in maintaining and improving this outstanding natural feature which is their heritage. Beginning with the donation of Zilker Park in the early 1930's, Austin has made a commitment to creating a happy marriage of river and parklands in the heart of the city.

The first generation of this effort centered on the important confluence of Barton Creek and the Colorado River and included the creation of Barton Springs Pool, extensive clearing for picnic and recreation spaces, and construction of buildings, amphitheaters, outlooks, retaining walls, paths, and park furniture throughout Zilker Park. Stone for construction by the Civilian Conservation Corps was quarried in the park, including the site of the present Austin Nature Center west of MOPAC. The Zilker clubhouse, the rifle range and the overlook at the far western edge of Zilker Park are remnants of this era, as are the many crumbled ruins of picnic areas spread among the underbrush that now pervades the area.

The second generation of enhancement of the Town Lake area contributed a series of important engineering improvements initiated in the 1950s and culminated by the completion of Longhorn Dam in 1960. Prior to that time the Colorado River was seriously flood-prone. Mud-flats along its banks could not be developed because of seasonally fluctuating water levels and the threat

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of floods. Clay quarries along the river's edge had been allowed to mar its natural beauty. At great expense and after much investment of civic effort, Longhorn Dam contained and created Town Lake -- a stable, scenic body of water whose banks could be improved with some dependability against catastrophic destruction by flood.

A third generation of Town Lake activism took on the task of enhancing those newly created banks. In the 1960s and early 1970s citizens like Roberta Crenshaw, Jeanette Fish, and Lady Bird Johnson spearheaded a movement which created the Hike and Bike Trail along Town Lake, planted thousands of trees and shrubs and installed extensive park furnishings. The marshalling of both public and private funds for this effort is particularly impressive as is the legacy we enjoy today of flowering peaches and crapemyrtles which have become a signature element for the district.

It is difficult to imagine Austin without such important symbols of the city as Barton Springs Pool, the Hike and Bike Trail and Town Lake itself. And yet, without the dedication and investment of these three generations, none of these important "natural" amenities of Austin would exist. While the potential for Town Lake Park was contributed by Mother Nature, many of the features Austinites treasure most today were achieved only through considerable civic investment of energy and resources.

Unfortunately, over the last decade that investment has dwindled noticeable. Recent years have not seen the same kind of visionary leap forward for Town Lake which marked the past three generations. The city has grown enormously over the past ten years and the use of Town Lake and its adjacent parklands has multiplied again and again during the period. While public support for the parks and Town Lake has remained strong, no new ambitious programs have been forwarded to take this valuable resource the next step in its enhancement.

In 1985 the Town Lake Task Force was established by the City Council of Austin to address the issue of improvements to Town Lake. The Task Force initiated a broad new view of the area which, when developed, was to be an agenda for this generation's contribution to Town Lake. For the first time, the Task Force envisioned the whole of Town Lake, from Tom Miller Dam on the west to Montopolis Bridge on the east, as a collection of waterways and open spaces which could become a Town Lake Park system. The product of their effort, *Town Lake Corridor Study*, identified community goals and stated policies for future development and appearance of the waterfront.

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A specific Action Priority stated within *Town Lake Corridor Study* called for "a long range comprehensive plan for the Corridor addressing both the native edge and water edge." Responding in May, 1986, the City through its Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) retained Johnson Johnson & Roy/inc. and Lawrence W. Speck Associates, Inc. to prepare the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan. Other members of the team included Halcyon, Ltd., Project for Public Spaces, Inc., Dr. Sandra Rosenbloom and Glass Environmental Consultants, Inc.

The report that follows is the result of an eighteen month period of creative planning and design through an intensive community participation process. Well over one hundred neighborhood meetings, interviews, group discussions and consultations have provided valuable input into the Plan. In addition, four city-wide public meetings were held to receive ideas, review recommendations and verify decisions. The product gives new significance to Town Lake's role in Austin's future; it is an interpretation of the community's aspirations into a physical plan and strategy to guide public and private actions along this exceptional resource.

The Plan is presented in several parts. The first, Baseline Situation, establishes the basis of the Plan through descriptions of the natural and cultural environment that exists in the Corridor and patterns of present park usage together with economic perceptions and citizen attitudes toward future development. The original reports and raw data from which these conclusions are drawn are contained in a separate appendix volume, as are numerous technical memorandums produced throughout the study. The second part, Plan Concept, presents guiding principles and the design concept for Town Lake Park, which combines features selected from several options. Recommendations pertaining to parkland expansion, land use and urban design for areas adjacent to the park are also stated. The physical plan for Town Lake Park is described in detail in the third section, Plan Description, and a strategy for its implementation is outlined in the fourth and final part, Implementation Strategy.

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## BASELINE SITUATION

### Land Use

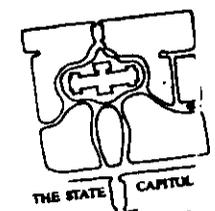
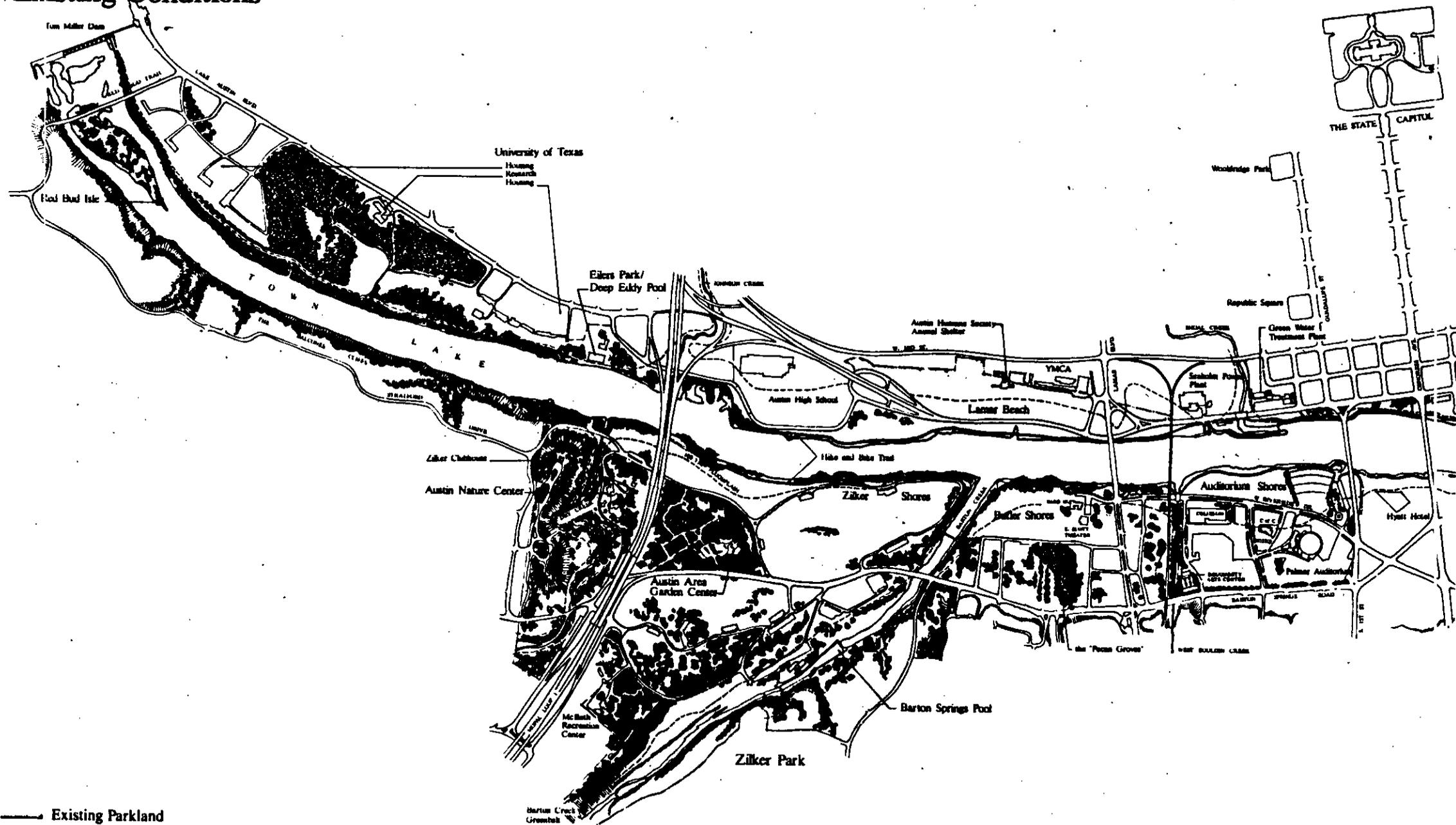
A wide range of varied land uses occur within the Town Lake Corridor exhibiting varying degrees of compatibility with each other and surrounding uses.

The Corridor contains a total of approximately 1900 acres. Dedicated parkland - land which must be used for park purposes and which cannot be sold, leased, traded or alienated without a public referendum - makes up the largest single category of use, with approximately 815 acres occurring adjacent to the lake. The largest and most heavily used park is Zilker Park on the south shore, which includes the Austin Nature Center and the Zilker Botanical Gardens. Other large contiguous park areas include Lamar Beach, Butler Shores, Auditorium Shores, Festival Beach, and Krieg Field. Between these larger parks, a number of smaller parcels form an incomplete linkage system of smaller waterfront parks. The Corridor is anchored with parkland at its east and west ends, respectively, by Colorado River Park and Red Bud Isle. Several major centers of recreational and social activity occur within the parklands, including the Zilker Clubhouse, Deep Eddy Swimming Pool, Barton Springs Swimming Pool, and Fiesta Gardens. Three major public utility sites - Seaholm Power Plant, Green Water Treatment Plant and the Holly Street Power Plant - have been recently dedicated as parkland and are slated for park use when their current uses end.

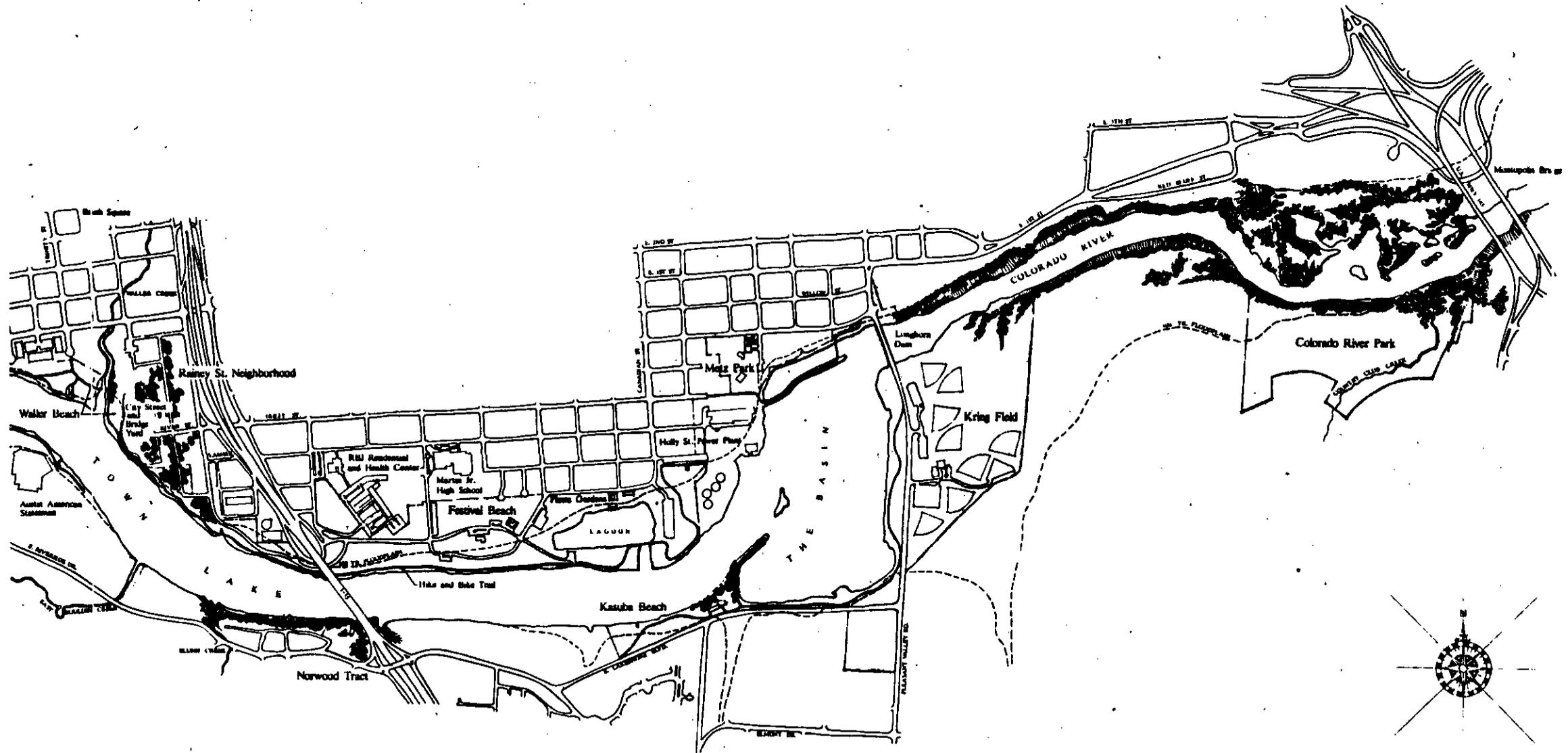
The parks within the study area proper are linked to the larger context of the city's neighborhoods and extended park system by linear greenbelt parks associated with Shoal, Waller, Barton, Johnson, and Blunn Creeks. The Hike and Bike Trail which links these greenbelts with Town Lake provides access to much of the lake's parklands. Its potential as a recreational experience is limited, however, by major gaps in the system, most notably from the Austin American-Statesman site to Kasuba Beach, and by a limited number of lake crossings.

Publicly owned lands which are not dedicated parkland comprise approximately 180 acres of the study area. Many of these sites present opportunities for enhancing their relationships to adjacent parkland or for redevelopment with a more sympathetic view towards waterfront park com-

# Town Lake Corridor Existing Conditions

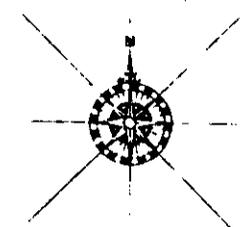


Existing Parkland



**GOLDEN GATE PARK**  
 Johnson Johnson

Legend:  
 [Symbol] Proposed  
 [Symbol] Existing  
 [Symbol] [Symbol] [Symbol] [Symbol] [Symbol]



SCALE  
 0 200 400 1000 1 mi.

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patibility. These sites include Austin High School, City Street and Bridge Yard, Rebekah Baines Johnson Residential and Health Center (EMS Administration), Martin Junior High School, and the LCRA offices near Tom Miller Dam.

Institutional uses comprise 246 acres of the study area. The highly scenic and environmentally sensitive shoreline owned by the University of Texas is currently inaccessible to the general public. These lands, part of a larger parcel known as the Brackenridge Tract, are currently used by the University for married student housing and for the University of Texas Brackenridge Research Center. Public access to this shoreline could provide opportunities for nature study and for viewing the most scenic reaches of the lake. Another significant institutional facility is the YMCA, a recreationally-oriented institution that is particularly compatible with adjacent parklands.

Office and commercial uses make up 198 acres of the study area. The commercial core of Austin, including the southern end of the Central Business District, exerts a profound visual impact on the heart of Town Lake and provides a significant number of daytime park users. Perhaps the greatest visual impact on the Corridor is produced by a number of high-rise hotels near the shore in the commercial district, including the Sheraton Crest Inn, the Hyatt Hotel, the Four Seasons Hotel and the Holiday Inn.

Occupying 96 acres of the study area, light industrial uses occur primarily in the urban core and east of Longhorn Dam. The most significant of these are the Austin American-Statesman on the south shore, a number of underutilized industrial sites immediately below Longhorn Dam on the north shore and the new Superior Dairy site near Montopolis Bridge.

Scattered throughout the study area are 353 acres of residential uses, including single family, multi-family and trailer parks. The Rainey Street neighborhood is an historic district whose unique character and proximity to Town Lake and the CBD give it special potential for redevelopment and/or revitalization. Trailer parks occupy the "pecan groves", a stand of 400-plus magnificent pecan trees strategically located between the Zilker Park/Barton Creek area and the 54 acre Palmer Auditorium site. Along Stratford Drive, large homes overlooking Town Lake have a significant visual impact on the scenic Balcones rock cliffs. Across the lake, University of Texas married student housing is sited on the north shore. The Towers of Town Lake and the Rebekah Baines Johnson Residential Center are two high rise residential buildings on the north shore. Nearby, the East Aus-

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tin residential area shares a common boundary with parkland for several blocks. Numerous apartment complexes are located along the south shore between the Austin American Statesman site and Kasuba Beach, near the northernmost fringe of the Travis Heights neighborhood along East Riverside Drive. In addition to these specific areas, existing neighborhoods surround the Town Lake Corridor, and opportunities to provide more residential development - especially affordable housing - are being sought by neighborhood organizations and planning advocates in East Austin and the Central Business District.

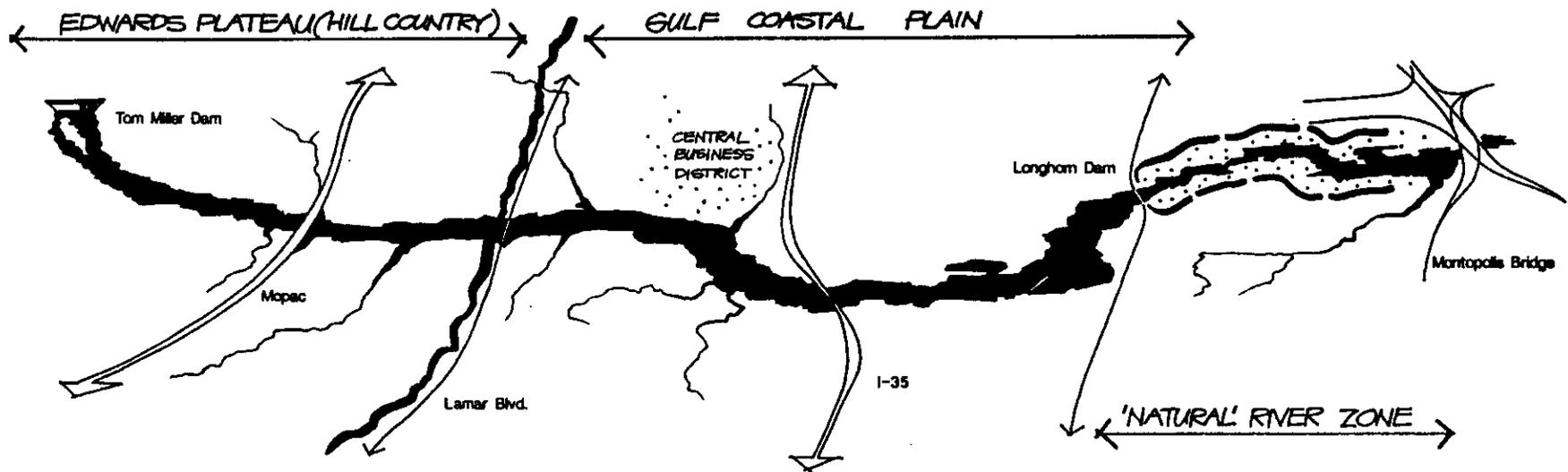
### **Natural Features**

Town Lake occurs within the transition of two major distinct physiographic zones. Those lands west of a line which runs roughly along Lamar Boulevard occur in the Edwards Plateau, a hilly region whose dominant landscape characteristics include thick, predominantly native vegetation, dramatic topography, thin, poor soils and exposed rock. Those lands east of the line occur in the Gulf Coastal Plain, characterized by broad, gentle slopes, deeper soils and (within the Corridor) predominantly introduced vegetation. Additionally, the river bottoms east of Longhorn Dam (the Colorado River zone) exhibit a third distinct landscape image, due primarily to the fact that here the river is free flowing. This special area is characterized by native riparian vegetation, steep bluffs, gravel shoals and clear, shallow water. Natural landscape features dominate the character of much of the Edwards Plateau and Colorado River zones at the western and eastern ends of the study area, respectively.

A comprehensive listing of natural resources found within the study area is included in the *Town Lake Corridor Study*. Many of the Corridor's natural features, however, are particularly noteworthy with regard to park and land use planning decisions and urban design alternatives, and are described in the following paragraphs.

Nine major creeks connect with Town Lake and the Colorado River within the study area, six of which carry greenbelt status and are accessible by trails. Barton Creek is an ecologically significant canyon accessed by an eight mile nature trail and greenbelt. Blunn Creek, the most ecologically intact of the urban creeks, forms the structure of a linear park with recreation and trail facilities. East and West Bouldin Creeks, two highly urbanized creeks, primarily serve drainage functions. Within the Austin Nature Center, Dry Creek exhibits an interesting escarpment. Across Town Lake

Baseline Situation:



Physiographic Zones within the Town Lake Corridor

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with a marsh at its mouth, Johnson Creek is an urbanized greenbelt furnished with a Hike and Bike Trail. The model for the city's greenbelt system, Shoal Creek, extends from Town Lake to 38th Street. East of downtown, a walkway along Waller Creek extends to Waterloo Park and Symphony Square. Country Club Creek occurs below Longhorn Dam in the Colorado River zone of the study area.

The size, relative isolation and scenic surroundings of Red Bud Isle, an island at the far west end of the Corridor, make it a unique recreational resource to be protected and enhanced. Nearby, the Balcones rock cliffs extend from Tom Miller Dam to Zilker Park along the lake's south shore, representing an invaluable scenic resource worthy of protection. The cliffs are listed on an inventory of Significant Natural Areas of Texas by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Some shallow caves occur near the north end of the cliffs.

Many areas of significant vegetation occur throughout the Corridor. The heaviest concentrations of vegetation are found west of MOPAC, with a well-preserved forest of the pecan-elm association occurring on the University of Texas' Brackenridge Research Center. Very large cypress trees occur along the shoreline, with particularly noteworthy specimens in and near Zilker Park. The "pecan groves" area and the concentration of hardwoods in the Rainey Street neighborhood represent significant stands of urban vegetation worthy of preservation. Shoreline vegetation, particularly at the eight creek confluences, serves important ecological functions such as shoreline stabilization and waterfowl nesting habitat, and should receive special attention during consideration of design alternatives.

Significant urban wildlife habitats within the Corridor include the University of Texas Brackenridge Research Center, the small marsh at the mouth of Johnson Creek, and the "natural" Colorado River zone downstream from Longhorn Dam. These areas present opportunities for the establishment of preservation zones.

The Colorado River zone between Longhorn Dam and Montopolis Bridge is characterized by clear shallow waters, coves, islands, sand and gravel bars and steep limestone bluffs. Much of this area is highly scenic and provides excellent wildlife foraging. It should also be considered for preservation.

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## **Visual Features**

The great diversity of land uses and landscape features within the study area produces a truly varied visual context. The largely natural character of the west end and the Montopolis area stand in stark contrast to the urbanized zone from Shoal Creek to I-35. Between these two extremes are transitional zones, generally soft in character and which reflect the images of the varied land uses along the shoreline, including large areas of passive parkland. The most significant visual issues within these zones relate to views of Town Lake, or lack thereof, and views to the State Capitol.

Views to the lake from its surrounding parks vary from unrestricted to severely limited. Broad, open views of the lake are offered along Festival Beach, Waller Beach, Auditorium Shores, and much of the Lamar Beach/Shoal Creek area. Conversely, views to the lake are almost completely blocked by shoreline vegetation at Eilers Park, Zilker Park, Butler Shores and at several gazebos, presumably built for lake viewing. Many opportunities exist to create a pleasing visual relationship with the lake through selective clearing of volunteer growth, greatly enhancing the aesthetic experience offered by these areas.

*Linear views of the lake are very good from the six vehicular bridges and Longhorn Dam.* Of particular note is the strong visual relationship between the Congress Avenue bridge and the City Street and Bridge Yard area near Waller Creek. This site offers an opportunity to provide a special architectural terminus for the western end of the visual axis created by Town Lake's longest reach. Also noteworthy are the exceptional views from the pedestrian bridge beneath MOPAC and the panoramic views from the shoreline across the wide lake area west of Longhorn Dam.

Views to the State Capitol Building are abundant within the study area. Seven viewlines are protected by ordinance, five others are not. The strongest visual axis within the study area is Congress Avenue, connecting the capitol with Town Lake. Exceptional capitol/skyline views coincide with unique park development opportunities at the Norwood Tract and Colorado River Park.

## **Park Character**

The approximately 815 acres of parkland within the Corridor represent a very wide range of landscape character, from the largely natural character of Red Bud Isle to the more urban charac-

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ter of East Shoal Beach, to the traditional metropolitan park character of Zilker Park. The parks and their surroundings boast several areas of exceptional scenic quality, including the ruggedly beautiful reach west of MOPAC, Barton Creek and the Barton Springs Pool area, the downtown lakefront near Buford Tower, the Norwood Tract and the lower Colorado River zone near Montopolis Bridge. During the spring, much of the lakefront is awash with color from flowering peach trees, while seasonal color beds near downtown and wildflower trails concentrated in the Lamar Beach area add beauty and seasonal interest to these areas.

Between these visual "high points" are long stretches of passive open space occasionally punctuated by gazebos, landings, benches and other facilities. These areas are generally pleasant and pastoral in character, yet primarily singular in use and visually monotonous. The dominance of these stretches of unremarkable park development led one local architect interviewed to describe Town Lake Park as having the quality of "too much sameness".

The parks themselves currently bear little resemblance to a continuous, unified system of waterfront parks, having been largely developed and maintained over the years as individual entities. In addition, the parklands host a number of municipal offices and other facilities which have little or no relationship to the parks, contributing to an overall sense of ambiguity. These include PARD offices and maintenance yards, fire department offices and training center, and an animal shelter. These facilities, though public in a technical sense, house day-to-day operations which are neither parkland nor waterfront dependent, and in this sense intrude upon highly prized waterfront parkland.

Large areas of privately owned land along Town Lake interrupt the continuity of the shoreline parks and contribute to the lack of a consistent image on the lakefront, as is evidenced by citizens confessing confusion as to which areas of lakefront are public and which are not. Such areas extend from Tom Miller Dam to Eilers Park and Austin Nature Center, from South First Street to Kasuba Beach on the south shore, and downstream from Longhorn Dam.

Lack of a consistent park image is evidenced by the fact that many people in Austin are not aware that various parts of the park, such as Festival Beach or Eilers Park, are part of the Town Lake Park system. The lack of a consistent image may relate to several factors. One is signage. Some of the signs in the park say Town Lake, others do not. Another factor is the design of the park structures. Because many of the buildings, gazebos, and other structures were built at different times with

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no consistent design or style, they appear to be separate units rather than part of an overall scheme. This is also true with the bridges that span Town Lake. Treated similarly, the bridges could visually help to establish a more unified image for the park.

The initial inventory of the Town Lake Corridor uncovered numerous valuable and scenic pieces of land which are designated as parkland but which are underutilized given their amenity and the overuse of other park areas. The northern frontage of Town Lake from Austin High School to Lamar Boulevard, for example, is a prime piece of lakefront which is currently little appreciated or used. Occupied by singular-use playing fields and the Austin Humane Society Animal Shelter, this is potentially one of the most beautiful areas along the lake. Its nearness to downtown and west Austin neighborhoods adds potential as does the adjacent location of the YMCA. Reducing the role of First Street as a major traffic carrier would give even greater promise for this area in the future.

Similarly, the stretch of parkland between Barton Springs Pool and Robert E. Lee Road is also underutilized. Adjacent to the most beautiful and well-developed part of Zilker Park, it is dominated by barren ball fields and disorganized parking. Numerous other areas within the Corridor provide similar opportunities for dramatic redevelopment, including Butler Shores, Kasuba Beach, and Festival Beach.

### **Park Use**

The character of a park, to a great extent, is determined by the people who use it. By understanding how a park is used before it is redesigned or improvements made, park planners and managers can avoid repeating past design and management mistakes and can optimize use in the future.

Within the context of previous studies and as part of the analysis needed to develop a comprehensive plan for the park, information concerning the people who currently use and manage Town Lake Park was collected during June and July of 1986, and was supplemented by data collected during January and February 1987. In order to understand how different areas in the park were used, the location of people in the park was recorded at several different times of day and week. The age, gender, race and size of group was also recorded to define more clearly what type of people use the park. To understand what people do in the park, the type of activity they were engaged in was ob-

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served and recorded; the use of the lake itself was based on boat rental figures. In order to understand park users' perceptions about the park and to identify problems and needed improvements, short interviews with park users were conducted.

PARD staff concerns were also identified. In workshop sessions with the Town Lake Management, Technical and Ex-Officio Teams, issues such as vehicle and pedestrian circulation, security, landscape and building maintenance, programs and events, and information and signage were discussed. All data concerning park use was collected in a cooperative effort between the consulting team, Urban Park Rangers, and PARD project staff. Together these observations, which are recorded in detail in the appendix volume of the Plan, provided a good understanding of who uses the park, what areas are or are not used, and what types of activities people pursue in the park.

The typical park user could be described as a white, young adult male. Forty-eight percent of the park users were between the ages of 18 and 34, 26% were 35 to 65 and 16% were 6 to 17 years old. Only 3% were over 65 and 7% were under 6 years of age. Only 29% of the park users were female. (Research has shown that women are more particular about the public spaces they use, largely due to heightened concerns over safety and the availability of washrooms). Overall 48% of those observed were white, 31% were Hispanic and 13% were Black.

The majority of people who use Town Lake Park during summer months are in areas surrounding the pools at Barton Springs and Deep Eddy. For example, on a typical weekend afternoon at 3:00 PM, there are 2,300 to 3,300 people at the two pools, which constitutes approximately 80% to 85% of the people who are in the park overall at that time.

Within the rest of the park, certain areas are consistently more heavily used than others. These include the shoreline along the lower Colorado River (where people fish) and under the MOPAC bridge (a staging area for joggers). The least used areas in the park are the Kasuba Beach area, the north shore of the lake between the MOPAC bridge and the First Street bridge, and the shoreline adjacent to Zilker Park.

The numbers of people who use the Hike and Bike Trail account for over half the use of the park overall. The most heavily used sections of the Hike and Bike Trail are from the MOPAC bridge to the First Street bridge on both sides of the lake. These sections, at times, had up to ten

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times as many people using them as did the other sections. Fifty-seven percent of the trail users were jogging, 35% were walking or strolling. Ten percent were on bicycles, most of whom seemed to use the trail as a route to and from school rather than for recreational riding.

In the rest of the park (excluding the pools), relaxing (sitting, socializing, sunbathing) was the most common activity (19%), and fishing was second (13%). Other activities included snacking or picnicking (8%) and playing (4%, which includes both children and adults).

Although the use of the Hike and Bike Trail is heaviest before 9:00 AM and after 5:00 PM, use of the other park areas varies little over the course of the day. The Hike and Bike Trail is used as heavily on weekends as on weekdays. In the rest of the park, there are nearly twice as many people on weekends as on weekdays. This increased weekend use was especially apparent in Eilers Park, along the shores of the lower Colorado River and on the lake. For example, there are typically 40 to 50 canoes rented at Zilker Park on a weekday, while 375 to 400 are rented on a typical weekend. During winter months, user numbers well significantly during sunny periods; freezing or near freezing temperatures do not hinder active users if the sky is clear by early morning. After dark users tend to be trysters, strollers and transients seeking food and shelter.

Problems that were identified by park users concerned maintenance and management issues (litter, trail conditions, restroom maintenance), design issues (inadequate parking, not enough restrooms and trash cans, poor lighting at night) and conflicts with other park users (mostly transients and dogs). The major improvements that people suggested concerned a variety of design improvements - primarily that more restrooms and trash cans were needed. Other suggestions concerned maintenance issues such as the need to pick up litter more often and for better trail maintenance. A complete list of reported problems and suggested improvements is listed in the appendix volume of the Plan.

Analysis of the park use data revealed several major issues and led to a number of recommendations for their resolution. For example, while areas such as Barton Springs in Zilker Park and Deep Eddy in Eilers Park are centers of activity, there are few other areas that provide the combination of services and amenities that attract a broad range of people to use them. Currently few children or older people use the park. Many park areas are or are perceived to be inaccessible due to factors such as the lack of convenient parking and boat landing areas. Overgrown underbrush has visual-

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ly obscured many parts of the lake from the shore and the trail. People feel unsafe using areas in the park that are isolated from public view.

In order to reduce the overcrowding of some park areas, encourage use in other areas, and to attract children and older people to the park, additional activity centers in a few specific areas should be developed. Potential sites for these activity centers are areas that already have some activity but lack the full range of services and amenities to attract people on a regular basis. Auditorium Shores, Festival Beach, Buford Tower and South Lakeshore are examples.

The Hike and Bike Trail, which is one of the most heavily used facilities in the park, is too narrow in many places to accommodate joggers, bikers, and walkers. In addition, the trail is not continuous, particularly where it intersects the bridges that cross Town Lake. In other areas, city and park roads inhibit people from crossing between areas in the park, or between adjacent neighborhoods and the park. The trail should be divided in some areas so that there is one path for bikes and another for walking and jogging. Continuous loops for both should be developed with easy access onto and over all bridges. Better staging areas should be developed for joggers, and underbrush along isolated trails should be selectively cleared. The bridges that span the lake should be redesigned to have wider pedestrian sidewalks, decorative railings and pedestrian lighting fixtures.

Few cities in the country have an urban park of the size and stature of Town Lake Park. Even fewer have a program designed to meet the intensive management needs that such a park requires. Issues such as security, maintenance, the planning of programs and events, traffic and parking, concession management and marketing and the provision of adequate signage and information all require continuous management and funding. In order to more effectively implement the recommendations that will be made as part of the comprehensive plan, a separate park administrator's office should be established to manage Town Lake Park.

### **Water Quality and Hydrology**

Town Lake is a riverine reservoir with a surface area of approximately 500 acres and an average depth of seven feet. As the lowermost link in a chain of seven Highland Lakes, the water quality and flow regime is strongly influenced by releases from upstream lakes. An annual average

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flow of 1376 cubic feet per second (cfs) is released from Lake Austin into Town Lake. At this rate of inflow, the average retention time of water in Town Lake is approximately two days.

The other principal sources of inflow to Town Lake are nine creeks which drain an area of 162 square miles. The largest tributary, Barton Creek, has a drainage area of 125 square miles, 77% of the total drainage area associated with creeks. While Barton Creek is predominantly rural at this time, the remaining eight creeks drain areas which are predominantly urbanized. The largest is Shoal Creek with a drainage area of 13 square miles, at least twice as large as the drainage area of any of the other urban creeks. The annual average inflow from tributary creeks is estimated to be 112 cfs, approximately 8% of the total annual inflow to Town Lake.

Categories of potentially desirable uses investigated for Town Lake included fishing, non-contact recreation (recreational pursuits not involving a significant risk of water ingestion, such as fishing and boating), contact recreation (activities involving a significant risk of water ingestion, such as swimming and water skiing), drinking water supply, and power plant cooling. Several groups of water quality parameters were identified as being important to maintaining the ability of the lake to support these uses. Control of pathogenic contaminants and toxic materials is important in waters used for contact recreation and water supply because of potential public health effects. High levels of degradable organics can decrease dissolved oxygen levels and adversely impact aquatic life and thereby affect the use of the lake for fishing. Excessive concentrations of inorganic salts can interfere with the use of the waters for industrial purposes. Control of nutrients and solids is important in maintaining the use of the lake for noncontact recreation, since excessive levels of these parameters can create aesthetically objectionable conditions.

The water quality evaluations in this report were conducted in July of 1986; detailed findings and raw data are included in the appendix volume of the Plan. The evaluations are based on previous studies and historical data collected by a number of agencies and organizations. A detailed evaluation of this data was conducted to document historical and existing water quality characteristics of Town Lake and of the Colorado River immediately below Longhorn Dam.

The data were analyzed to determine the existence of any significant trends with regard to depth, base flow versus wet weather conditions, seasonal fluctuations, spatial variations, and changes over time. No trends related to depth were identified, and none would be expected given the

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shallow depth of Town Lake and the short retention time. Analysis of base flow versus wet weather conditions reflected the impact of storm events on the quality of the lake. Concentrations of runoff-generated pollutants such as phosphorus, suspended solids, and fecal coliform were somewhat higher in wet weather conditions; however, these relationships were much more pronounced in the tributaries than in Town Lake itself. The tributaries also exhibited increased concentrations of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and nitrogen during wet weather conditions.

Seasonal fluctuations were most noticeable in the counts of fecal coliform. Counts tend to be highest in the spring and fall during the two peak rainfall seasons in this region.

Spatial trends in coliform counts were observed in relation to the location of the monitoring station. Lower coliform counts occurred in the upstream portions of the lake, above the confluence of Barton and Shoal creeks with Town Lake. No other parameters exhibited significant spatial trends.

A possible trend was identified for decreasing dissolved oxygen concentrations over time. However, not enough data were available to confirm this observation.

Water quality analysis indicated that Town Lake is suitable for all of the potentially desirable uses except contact recreation. Criteria for fecal coliform counts were exceeded, particularly at downstream stations during the warmer months of the year. The study identified no limitations at the time for uses of the lake waters for fishing, noncontact recreation, drinking water supply and industrial activities, though ongoing studies are being conducted by others.

## **Transportation Issues**

### **Overview**

Land uses and their relative densities have a profound impact on the capacity of a transportation system to serve its users efficiently. Similarly, public uses of park land and one's perception of that use as a positive or negative experience is greatly influenced by the manner in which people move to and through the area in private vehicles, on public transportation, as bicyclists or as pedestrians. Major streets and highways provide an organizing 'skeleton' or infrastructure for

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development. They create strong edges but can also obstruct pedestrian movement and the efficient use of outdoor space.

The transportation infrastructure serving the Town Lake Corridor displays all of these characteristics. It provides the means by which most Austinites experience the Corridor most often. Town Lake is crossed no less than seven times within the study area by north/south vehicular arterials including Red Bud Trail, MOPAC Loop 1, Lamar Boulevard, South First Street on Drake Bridge, Congress Avenue, Interstate Highway 35, and Pleasant Valley Road over Longhorn Dam. Also, the Montopolis Bridge carries U.S. Highway 183 over the Colorado River at the east end of the study area. Major east/west roadways roughly define the northern limits of the study area including Lake Austin Boulevard, West 3rd Street, Holly Street, Willow Street, and East 5th Street. Other major roadways north of the lake include West and East First Street and park roads such as Festival Beach Drive. Major roadways south of the lake include Stratford Drive, Barton Springs Road, West Riverside Drive, East Riverside Drive and South Lakeshore Boulevard.

In addition to major vehicular ways, the study area is served by the Town Lake Hike and Bike Trail system, a major pedestrian and bicycle facility whose effectiveness is limited by major gaps in the system and bridge crossings that are too few and/or too narrow.

Public transit in the study area includes Capitol Metro bus service and the 'Dillo', a motorized trolley. While no rail transit currently exists, Austinplan Sector One has proposed a light rail corridor through their district along Guadalupe Street and across the Drake Street Bridge. Interest was also expressed by some Austinplan sectors adjacent to the lake in a wheeled shuttle system to serve all of Town Lake Park.

#### Key Issues

Within this larger context, a number of key issues focus upon more localized aspects of the transportation system, such as individual streets or intersections. Some are being addressed in detail as parts of ongoing studies by others; all have a direct influence on land use planning and design in the Town Lake Corridor.

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The first key issue is the division of Zilker Park by Barton Springs Road. The portion of Barton Springs Road which bisects Zilker Park currently serves as the only major east/west connection south of the lake between MOPAC and the downtown bridges. It also is the primary access to attractions such as the Barton Springs Pool, Zilker Botanical Gardens and numerous sports fields and picnic sites. Via Stratford Drive which it intersects at the heart of the park, it provides access to the Austin Nature Center and the pedestrian bridge beneath MOPAC. Presently, no safe means exist for pedestrians to safely cross Barton Springs Road at any point within Zilker Park. Experiencing the park's full range of opportunities on foot can be a risky, if not life-threatening, proposition. The park is distinctly divided by the road into northern and southern 'sub-parks', and park users are forced to resort to their automobiles as the safest means of moving from one to the other. This creates more vehicular traffic in the park, resulting in yet more vehicle/pedestrian conflict. Well-designed grade-separated crossings over Barton Springs Road would alleviate this conflict and allow the full potential of Zilker Park to be realized.

Another key issue involves the intersection of Riverside Drive and Barton Springs Road, known locally as the 'X'. This juncture is at the heart of a confusing series of intersections produced by South First Street, Congress Avenue, Riverside Drive and Barton Springs Road. The resulting five skewed intersections and the visual clutter associated with the surrounding commercial development can be described as chaotic at best. The 'X' arguably serves the positive function of interrupting what might otherwise be a continuous east/west route between I-35 and MOPAC Boulevard in the proximity of several residential areas. This discontinuity might be accommodated without its attendant disorientation and visual chaos through better directional signage, design controls on private signage, and street tree planting.

A third key issue involves the need to provide better physical and visual access to Town Lake through a more continuous park road system around the lake. A major gap occurs south of the Colorado River east of Longhorn Dam. On the north, vistas from Red Bluff Street would add a new dimension to experiencing the valley. Visual contact with the lake from Lake Austin Boulevard and East Riverside Drive would enhance people's awareness of the park. Between downtown and East Austin, improved connections from East First Street to Festival Beach Drive and Canadian Street would eliminate conflict between park users and neighborhood residents.

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In addition to these key issues, a number of transportation related activities are currently being planned, discussed, or are underway in the Town Lake Corridor and will require continued coordination. A detailed list and discussion of these appears in the appendix volume of the Plan.

### **Economic Stakeholder Analysis**

This analysis represents the first step toward developing an outlook, a strategy, and tools that will lead toward an economically feasible and politically acceptable revitalization strategy for the Town Lake Corridor. Successful preservation and development must earn the support of key stakeholder groups and attract their direct participation. The ability to capture the study area's potential ultimately requires a development strategy that promotes multi-sector stakeholder partnerships/interactions, is comprehensive in its scope, and allows all participants to share in both the risks and rewards. The catalyst for partnerships is based on identifying areas of mutual interest, and then targeting "doable" projects that enjoy market support and interested, public/private investment coalitions. Accordingly, information was gathered through interviews to identify problems to be addressed, resources that each party could bring to bear on those problems, and structures needed for partnership initiatives.

The issues surrounding preservation and development of Town Lake are both varied and complex. Physically, Town Lake extends through such a large portion of Austin that a number of sub-zone users and interest groups can legitimately claim a portion of the study area as their "turf". The Corridor contains several neighborhoods ranging from affluent to underprivileged. The dimension and visual sweep of the lake make it one of the most recognizable and important "image givers" to the entire city of Austin. Yet, its image is greatly fragmented by individual interests related to individual areas of the lake, rather than as parts of a greater whole. As one stakeholder said, "Town Lake is Austin's center, but the lake itself has no symbolic or functional focus."

The single point of consensus among all stakeholders interviewed was that Town Lake's future is critical to the quality of life in Austin. Beyond that, widely divergent opinions were expressed as to how best enhance, protect, and preserve the Town Lake Corridor as the heart of the community. Major issues identified in the interviews, conducted in the summer of 1986, related to pro-development vs. anti-development sentiments, the role that the City of Austin should play as a partner in development, the need for more downtown housing, Austin's development climate, the

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significance of the proposed convention center and its site, and the need for more animation of Town Lake with "people places".

Distinctions within these issues are indicative of the lack of a single, clear community vision for Town Lake. The stakeholder analysis suggests that in place of a unified community vision there are many site-specific or single-issue visions concerning Town Lake, that all of these visions do not agree, and that the policy and planning directions determined by the City of Austin in the near future will set the course for the entire Town Lake Corridor.

How, where, and whether Town Lake should be developed at all is central to all the other issues. Opinions about sites in the central portion of the study area, from the Lamar Boulevard bridge to the I-35 bridge, are the most polarized. While some desire concentrated mixed-use development on both shores, others seek to maintain and expand Town Lake Parkland as a greenbelt running through the city with an emphasis on nature and wildlife conservation. Both groups believe their goals are the correct ones for the symbolic center of Town Lake, and both seem to believe the other represents an extremist position. The two groups are in substantial agreement about other parts of Town Lake's development.

The City of Austin regards Town Lake as its urban centerpiece and a major contributor to the city's quality of life, and sees the need to improve recreational, cultural, scenic and economic opportunities in the Corridor. Several issues concern the City. Zoning, land uses and urban design need to be more sensitive to ecological, recreational and sociocultural needs of the waterfront. The increased pace and scale of development in the recent past has created access, traffic and parking-related problems that require resolution in context with potential land use changes in the Corridor. The quilt-like pattern of land ownership in the Corridor has created a conflicting assortment of land uses and led to recent efforts by the city to gain additional control of strategic sites. The inconsistent level of water quality, considered a threat to Town Lake's scenic and recreational values, will require additional effort to insure that development standards and runoff controls are environmentally sufficient. The city's ability and willingness to commit its resources toward these ends will greatly affect the formation and feasibility of the improvement strategy.

Downtown-oriented housing for professionals, employees, and students was perceived to be a strong need by almost all sectors interviewed. Neighborhood group representatives called for

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affordable housing on or near Town Lake. Preservation of the Rainey Street neighborhood as a residential historic district for low-to-moderate income persons was also discussed as more desirable than high density development on that site. Housing adjacent to downtown was viewed as a highly desirable use to improve the safety and security along Town Lake and to help make downtown a 24-hour environment. In addition to the potential employee and student markets, the growing elderly population and empty-nesters were mentioned as logical residents who would support retail/restaurant/service businesses, and would avail themselves of the cultural and recreational facilities along the lake.

The slow-down of Austin's recent explosive growth will have an impact on the City's ability to attract private sector participation in Town Lake's development, although some believe that the slower pace will encourage better projects. Overall, the private sector's perspective of Town Lake's development and enhancement potential is ambivalent, ranging from negative to optimistic, provided certain actions, such as site clearance and construction of infrastructure improvements in selected areas, were taken by the City. In the absence of an overall, coherent strategy supported by a City/community coalition, land owners thought that the area on both sides of Town Lake was too volatile politically and too unstable economically. A large mixed-use project, such as the proposed convention center, with a critical mass capable of generating development momentum was supported as an appropriate waterfront land use. An officially adopted plan would provide what several land owners called "a sense of confidence and predictability" for the area and would facilitate greater private interest in it.

The idea that Austin's arts/cultural/museum facilities should be centralized in a district along both sides of Town Lake is widely shared. Possible new facilities suggested include a childrens' museum, aquarium, planetarium, science museum, educational/learning center, performing arts pavilion, amphitheater, Mexican-American heritage center, riverwalk along Shoal Creek, festival retail project or museum in the Seaholm Power Plant building, and a Texas Music Museum. Some expressed doubt that so many cultural facilities are possible anywhere in Austin, given the population, the lack of major corporations which would subsidize so many projects, and increasing demands on City funds. Although ideas varied about where and how many of these facilities would be placed along Town Lake, there was consensus that recreational uses other than Hike and Bike Trails, picnicking, and open spaces are needed and that the logical area for the grouping is within the central zone of the Corridor. Several people thought that rowing would be a pleasant attraction for viewers on both shores of Town Lake.

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All major stakeholder groups feel that an essential prerequisite for enhancement in the quality of the Town Lake Corridor is to have more land placed under the aegis of PARD. Recent efforts and initiatives to assemble additional land is regarded as a way to protect the City's and public's options for the future. The majority of the stakeholders, particularly the City and the private sector, contended that the Town Lake Corridor warrants being a special planning district with an independent commission. In order to prevent political groups or potentially volatile issues from hindering prospective improvements and enhancement programs, the comprehensive planning process must continue to involve neighborhood groups and incorporate their concerns into the development strategy.

### Conclusion

Austinites rightfully regard Town Lake as the "heart and soul" of Austin, a ribbon of scenic beauty, quiet pleasure and recreational opportunity in the heart of their city. As such it is a major contributor to the city's quality of life, but one with potential yet to be fully realized. While there is apparent disagreement as to the best means to realize this potential in specific areas, there appears to be a surprising degree of consensus on some broader issues. These areas of consensus, combined with the consultant's findings through the inventory and analysis process and the visions and ambitions of the community for what Town Lake can be, form a solid foundation for the formulation of a conceptual plan.

It is generally felt, for example, that a key to enhancement of the quality of the Town Lake Corridor is the dedication of more parkland in strategic areas. Presently, the Town Lake parklands and the image of the total Corridor suffer from a lack of continuity and an inconsistent character. Parklands are surrounded and interrupted by a mix of land uses of varying compatibility and are occasionally intruded upon by public uses whose relationships to the parks are dubious at best. The resulting ambiguous character of the parkland is magnified by the lack of a strong design ethic in the development of the parks themselves. This is evidenced by a lack of defined entrances, edges, and park road treatments, as well as by the lack of a consistent design vocabulary for the park's architecture, path systems, shoreline treatments, furniture items and plant material.

Existing amenities, it is felt, should be enhanced and expanded, including Hike and Bike Trail extensions and crossings, additional concessions and more shade. More vitality should be given

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to the parks with additional "people places" including cultural arts and museum facilities. Shoreline activities and access to the water, especially in the central, downtown zone of the Corridor, are also desired.

It is generally felt that current land uses do not reflect the fullest potential of the Corridor, that new development should be scaled for human use and create a positive synergy between it and adjacent parklands. Opportunities to enhance the relationship of existing compatible land uses to the parks should be capitalized upon. Housing, especially for moderate to low income families, should be considered for future development.

While major roadways through parklands serve a positive function in providing a pleasant visual experience for motorists, heavy crosstown traffic through parks should be discouraged, and major pedestrian/vehicular conflicts should be resolved. Roadways and pedestrian paths should make the lake more accessible physically and visually, and the possibility of a shuttle transit system for Town Lake parklands should be explored. Protection of Town Lake's water quality and the unique environmental and visual features of the valley should be paramount in the evaluation of development and conservation alternatives.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, continued dialogue of public participation and feedback throughout the planning and design process is crucial to the Plan's credibility and relevance, and to enhance its chances for ultimate acceptance and successful implementation.

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## PLAN CONCEPT

### A Vision for Town Lake Park

Input from both neighborhood and business sources emphasized the need to maintain a dominant parklike sensibility through the Town Lake Corridor. The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan recognizes and embraces these views as a springboard for a new vision of Town Lake Park.

Town Lake, at the heart of the city, should project beauty, serenity, and naturalness. It should be the garden focus of more intensively developed districts which adjoin it. There are very few cities in the United States which have such an opportunity to remain "green" in their core, and there are very few cities for whom such a strong physical gesture would be more in keeping with the sentiments of the population.

This, of course, should not preclude extensive activity of varying intensities along the Town Lake frontage. Cultural, recreational, and even commercial events should enliven the Corridor, but they can and should be injected at a density and with a design sensitivity that always keeps them in a park setting. A concert facility can be a large, obtrusive building surrounded by parking or it can be nestled into the topography, veiled in vegetation, and served by parking out of the public view. A museum can be monumental, dominating, and urban in character, or it can be gently set like a jewel in the natural landscape. A ballfield cluster can be simply an efficient facility dominated visually by signs, light standards, and bleachers, or it can be interwoven with vegetation and topography so as not only to provide additional shade and amenity to participants but also to reduce visual intrusion into the landscape. Buildings and other physical gestures in the Town Lake Corridor must be made *integral and sympathetic with the landscape*.

Private development adjacent to Town Lake parklands should also take visual cues from the natural environment. Building massing should demur to open spaces, avoiding clashes of scale. Building materials, colors, and textures should be sympathetic to landscape materials, colors, and textures. Compatible functions, especially those relating to recreation and public service activities, should be oriented toward parklands and open spaces.

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The goal of both public and private development should be to create continuity in the entire Corridor area so that the lake frontage from Tom Miller Dam to Montopolis Bridge seems like one great park, gently inhabited to greater or lesser degrees by both public and private activities. Within the district there should be great variations from almost totally undisturbed and natural to an urbane and refined park character. The "green" quality should, however, always be dominant.

Design will be the paramount issue in accomplishing these goals; design of both public and private improvement, design of both landscape and building elements. Structures placed along Town Lake should not be generic in character. Insofar as is possible, they should be particular to Austin and Town Lake. The sort of bench or light standard which might be appropriate in an urban plaza would not be appropriate in Town Lake Park. There should be a distinctiveness which gives a special sense of place and cohesiveness to the Corridor parklands.

#### **Five Park Types**

The rich diversity of environmental and cultural conditions surrounding Town Lake suggest that this vision of Town Lake Park could be not one, but many parks, offering a very wide range of activities and experiences. This concept is strengthened by the diversity of the needs, aspirations and visions of Austinites for Town Lake:

- \* The desire to maintain a more natural character in the lake's unspoiled areas; to preserve the best of its natural features.
- \* To provide, where appropriate, for neighborhood cultural expression and recreational needs.
- \* To better accommodate existing uses within the parks while providing a richer array of activities and experiences for all age groups, interests and abilities.
- \* To accommodate cultural activities and events in the beautiful setting of the Town Lake parklands.

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**\* To create a mutually beneficial, synergistic relationship between Town Lake and the downtown area.**

In response to these issues and natural conditions, five park types are proposed to occur along Town Lake. Each of them makes a special contribution toward the range of activities which should occur in this, the richest and most extensive urban open space in the city. Each type also carries with it physical implications which will keep the Town Lake district varied and diverse in character.

**The Preserve** - The lowest density park type is reserved for large areas of natural topography and native vegetation where human activity is limited, and the near total retention of natural landscape is appropriate. Because Town Lake is man-made and the impoundment of the Colorado River has, in itself, altered the natural landscape, preservation as an idea cannot be applied compulsively. There are, however, significant areas in the study district which merit preservation or restoration of more natural conditions.

The cliffs and bluffs which rise from Town Lake, for example, eloquently bespeak the time-formed geology of the region. Occasional springs can be found emanating from their limestone strata. These natural edges form a dramatic and appropriate backdrop for the water course itself.

Isolated pockets of land such as Red Bud Isle and the north shore of the free-flowing Colorado River just west of Montopolis Bridge offer opportunities for districts apart from the city which surrounds them, wild areas in strong contrast to the tamed urban landscape. These areas should remain dominated by tangles of native vegetation. Their rugged rock outcroppings should not be softened for human use. They should stand as reminders of the physical character that was here before human settlement.

Preserve districts should nurture both vegetation and wildlife which cannot occur in more "civilized" areas of Town Lake Park. Native grasses and undergrowth would be encouraged. Animal habitats, particularly waterfowl nesting areas, would be protected.

This notion of preservation does not preclude human use in the Preserve districts, but implies restrictions on that use. Nature trails might be introduced but would likely be elevated or other-

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wise designed to be as unobtrusive as possible. Numbers of users would be limited and perhaps even controlled by adjacent interpretive facilities, adding an educational dimension to the Preserve.

Austinites are proud of the beauty of the central Texas Hill Country which their city occupies. The growth of the city has, perhaps necessarily, compromised some of that natural beauty. It is important, however, to keep some small areas sacrosanct to maintain reminders of the native beauty of the region.

**The Neighborhood Park** - The second park type is in response to Town Lake Park's proximities to a number of the city's longstanding residential neighborhoods. Town Lake Park should be seen as belonging to the whole city, but it should also transform itself occasionally to become an adjunct and transition to the neighborhoods which border it. The people who live in Montopolis, East Austin, Travis Heights, the Barton Springs areas, Old West Austin and Tarrytown should be able to stake a special claim to portions of Town Lake Park.

These park areas would include neighborhood oriented amenities such as informal ball fields and courts, places for birthday parties, church picnics, festivals, and other such neighborhood gatherings. There should be playgrounds, strolling paths and picnic pavilions. Activities should be able to be informal and casual -- a pick-up game of basketball as opposed to tournament play.

Access to these parks should not preclude use by outsiders but should be clearly oriented to neighborhood users. Neighborhood Parks should be somewhat tucked away. Their scale should be intimate, with their emphasis on individuals and small groups rather than on massive gatherings.

Austin is proud of its fine neighborhoods. The neighborhoods adjacent to Town Lake are among the strongest and most livable in the city. The Neighborhood Parks within Town Lake Park should both draw character from those neighborhoods and also give back amenities which could strengthen and help maintain their desirability for the future.

**The Community Park** - The largest quantity of land in Town Lake Park will be devoted to Community Parks, districts with traditional park activities oriented to the entire Austin community. This park type is a focal element in most great cities, both in America and abroad.

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The Community Park is the great outdoor living room of the city. It is a focus for recreation and outdoor activity. It is a place for large-scale sports and games, a place for jogging, walking, strolling and exercise. The scale of the Community Park, necessarily large to accommodate larger groups of people, requires extensive contiguous areas.

The Community Park is dominantly a green place, although the demands of sports, recreation, picnicking, and other gatherings require durable surface treatment. It is, therefore, largely planned and landscaped rather than simply natural. Colorful and lavish gardens can often accent its beauty.

The Community Park requires services such as restrooms, food kiosks, security control and recreation concessions, and good management is a key to their success.

The best example of a Community Park in Austin currently is Zilker Park. Its mixture of sports, recreation, picnicking, informal gatherings and special happenings such as a ride on the train or the annual Christmas tree exemplify the kinds of things that should happen in a Community Park. Enhancing and extending Community Parks in Town Lake Park would help reduce overuse, would give greater geographical distribution and easier accessibility and would provide a much greater range of places and events.

**The Cultural Park** - Many great cities have found a compatibility between cultural institutions such as museums, theaters and concert halls, and the graciousness of a natural park setting. Places to view art or theater or to hear music have a similar pace and ambiance as places for strolling, picnicking, and enjoying nature. Groups have been established in Austin to plan futures for a number of cultural institutions, including the Botanical Gardens, Children's Museum, Science Museum, Discovery Hall, Planetarium and Music Museum, which would greatly enhance the quality of life in the city. The Cultural Park would be a home for these activities.

The Cultural Park must be, predominantly, a park. It is a green space first and foremost. The facilities which inhabit it must have an architectural character compatible with and perhaps even subservient to the park. The Kimball Museum in Fort Worth serves as an excellent example of a significant cultural institution which complements and enhances its park-like surroundings. Whereas the Community Park is largely oriented toward recreation and would be generally informal in charac-

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ter, the Cultural Park would be a quieter, probably somewhat more axial or formal place. There might be reflecting pools, allees of trees, gardens and amphitheaters that might appear too structured in the Community Park.

The definition of "cultural" should extend beyond institutions and include places for eating and talking, and informal as well as formal musical entertainment. There should be activities for children as well as adults. The Cultural Park should be a garden of active delights with places to see and experience, things to do and watch.

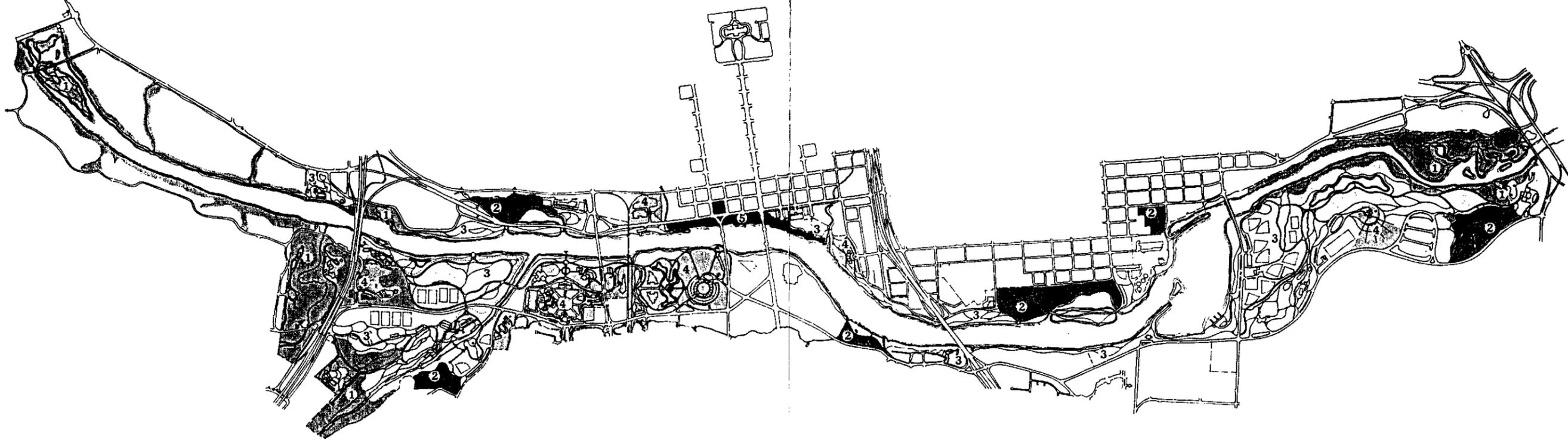
**The Urban Waterfront** - The final park type which should find appropriate application in Town Lake Park deals with the juxtaposition of city and open space. The Urban Waterfront would be the point at which high density urban development meets greenery and lake. There is an appealing tension in many cities between hard and soft, dense and sparse, man-made and natural where high density development stands in contrast to soft, lush natural spaces. The Urban Waterfront of Town Lake Park should revel in these contrasts. It should be notably green and parklike in contrast to the buildings and streets of the city itself but capable of handling very heavy use because of its closeness to a large number of users.

The Urban Waterfront should contain promenades and overlooks and be scenic and well kept. It should have some limited areas for group activities but should be largely available for casual activities like walking, lunching in the park, sitting and reading a newspaper.

The Urban Waterfront is a springboard for making the ambiance of Town Lake Park permeate the city. Through the creeks and tree-lined streets, the softness and graciousness of Town Lake Park should extend into downtown. Landscape and water features deep within the city should signal a connection to Town Lake, drawing particularly on activity centers such as East Sixth Street and making the obvious connections between these centers and Town Lake Park.

The locations of the five park zones within the Corridor are dictated to a large degree by the Corridor's diverse environmental conditions, landscape characters and existing development patterns. In most cases, distinct boundaries do not exist between adjacent zones, so that their characters might blend to a degree, each borrowing from the other as appropriate. Within the framework

# Plan Concept: Five Park Types



- Existing Parkland
- 1** The Preserve
  - 2** The Neighborhood Park
  - 3 The Community Park
  - 4** The Cultural Park
  - 5** The Urban Waterfront

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of the five park zones, more specific recommendations and ideas are developed into a master plan for Town Lake Park.

### **Parkland Expansions**

In several locations around the perimeter of Town Lake, expansion of the existing parkland will facilitate the introduction of new activities, provide continuity to the park and provide space at critical locations for specific park needs.

The largest addition to Town Lake Park recommended in the Comprehensive Plan is a 210 acre expansion of the existing Colorado River Park westward to Krieg Field and southward from the south shore of the Colorado River to an alignment proposed for South Lakeshore Boulevard between Pleasant Valley Road and Montopolis Drive. Predominantly floodplain, the proposed addition specifically includes sufficient land above the floodplain to accommodate construction of permanent structures and improvements. The combined area will fill the need for a large, metropolitan-scale park at the east end of the Corridor.

The second largest land area recommended for inclusion in Town Lake Park is the zone north of Barton Springs Road between Barton Creek and the Missouri Pacific Railroad bridge. Called Pecan Gardens in the Plan, the acquisition is intended to be developed as a Tivoli Gardens-like family entertainment center which will physically and functionally complement the recreational facilities of Zilker Park and the proposed cultural activity of Auditorium Shores. Portions of this area, Butler Shores and PARD headquarters, are already parkland; others like Zachary Scott Theater Center are City-owned properties. Because commercial activity, such as dining and entertainment, is integral to the Pecan Gardens concept, the pattern of public ownership need not include private land where its development is compatible with the overall concept. Specifically, parcels abutting the intersection of Barton Springs Road and South Lamar Boulevard and some frontage properties to the west along Barton Springs Road offer opportunity for private enterprise to benefit mutually with public development in immediate proximity to each other. The limited depth of developable land south of Barton Springs Road, the desire to protect the vegetated slopes rising from the road, and the opportunity to extend the landscape character of Zilker Park eastward along the roadway suggest the incorporation into the park area of available parcels south of Barton Springs Road.

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The several creeks entering Town Lake have a special significance to the urban form of Austin. Most of them (Shoal, Waller, Johnson, West Bouldin) meet the lake as parkland. Because East Bouldin and Blunn Creeks do not currently enjoy this status, the Plan recommends the acquisition of lands about their mouths. Their close proximity to each other further suggests combining their expression on Town Lake into a single land parcel to serve in part as a Neighborhood Park for the residential areas linked to it via the creek corridors.

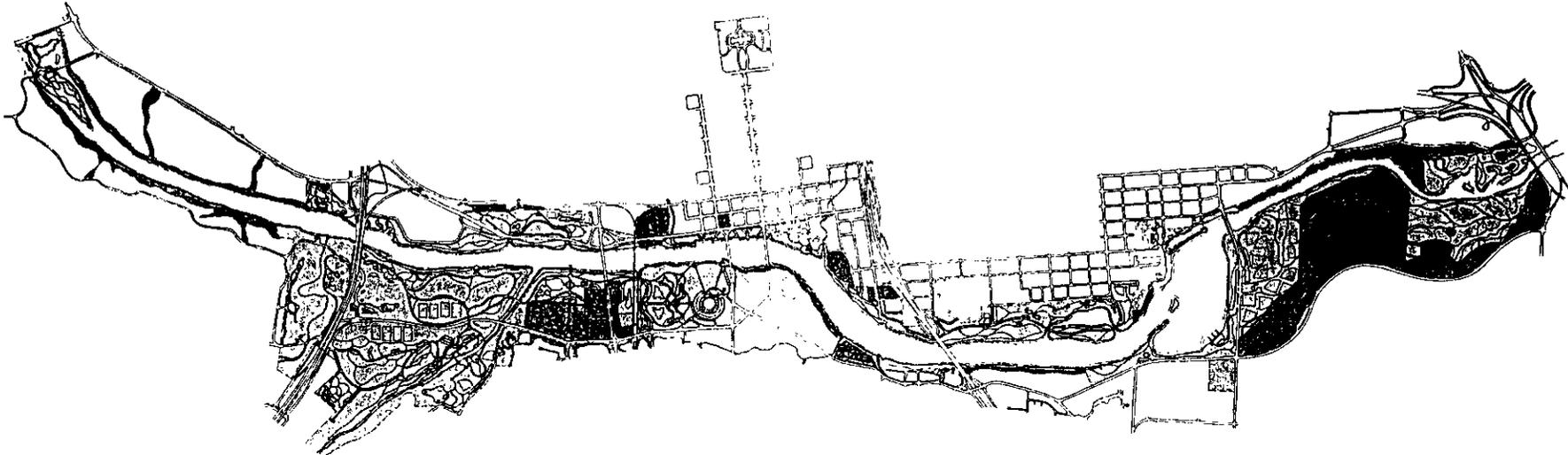
Linear extensions of parkland along the lake's south shore west of East Bouldin Creek to Auditorium Shores and east of Blunn Creek to Kasuba Beach will provide continuity of public access and completion of the trail systems. Segments are already in place at the Hyatt Hotel and Austin American Statesman; others can be in the form of dedicated easements or parkland acquisition.

Similarly on the north shore, an easement along the floodplain of the University of Texas' Brackenridge Tract will make possible the introduction of a nature trail connection between Eilers Park and Red Bud Isle. A parallel parkway setback on the south side of Lake Austin Boulevard is recommended for a hike-and-bike route. Pedestrian connections between the two trails are also suggested along natural landscape corridors.

Expansion of Eilers Park to Lake Austin Boulevard will significantly increase the visibility of the park facilities to the public. Together with the inclusion into the park of contiguous City-owned property presently used for maintenance operations, the additional land will accommodate needs for more parking and recreational facilities.

Another City-owned maintenance operation, the Street and Bridge Yard in the Rainey Street area, will be better used as parkland than for its present function. The site's situation high above Town Lake at the eastern end of its longest reach offers dramatic views and unparalleled opportunity for a public cultural/recreational use. Inclusion of one-half block of lower Rainey Street, already cleared of homes, will round out the parkland's borders and enhance its access to the surrounding neighborhood. A separate parcel nearby, bounded by Lambie Street, River Ave. and the I-35 service road is recommended to be public open space to enhance the visual quality of the freeway access into downtown.

# Parkland Expansions



Existing Parkland  
Proposed Expansions

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One recreational experience rare in Town Lake Park is the ability to enjoy wide panoramic vistas of the Colorado River Valley and perceive its regional scale and character. A vantage point affording this opportunity is located along the south side of Red Bluff Street. Acquisition of available parcels for parkland will enable the development of overlooks and picnic facilities. A walking trail will give access down to the proposed Preserve district on the valley floor.

One parcel currently City-owned and housing PARD maintenance functions is suggested for possible disposal to aid the acquisition of more favorable properties. Its location at the southwest intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and S. Lakeshore Boulevard suggests its appropriateness for providing parking needed in this area for park users. If accommodated here, however, safe pedestrian crossings across two heavily trafficked streets will need to be provided.

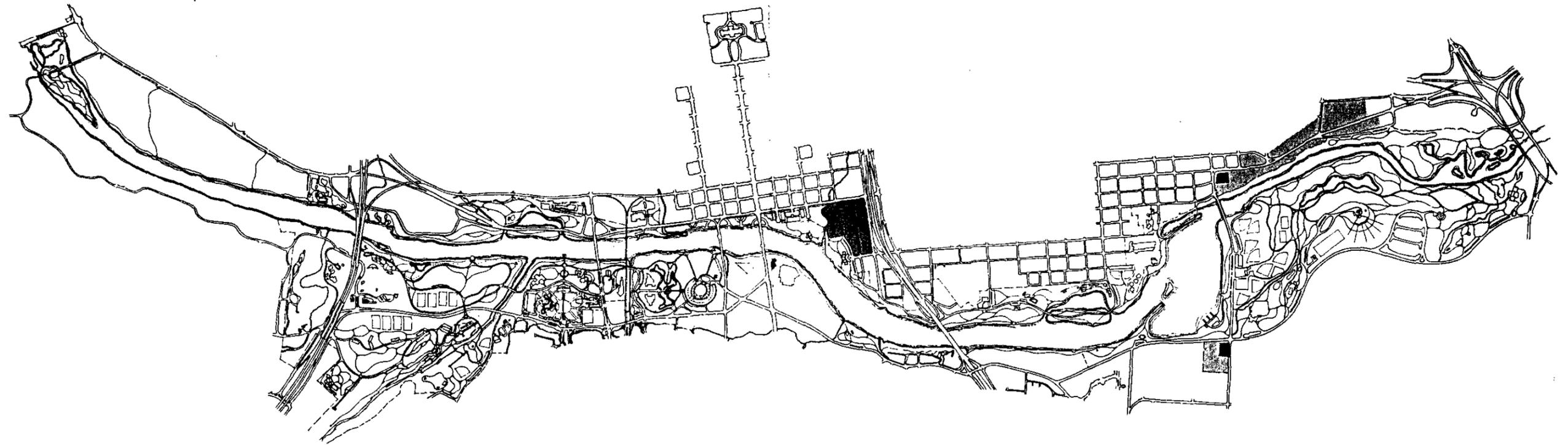
#### **Land Use**

In addition to parcels recommended to be acquired for parkland use, several areas are recommended for future new uses. All of them are contiguous to the park and are proposed for uses that can better benefit from this adjacency.

The area generally bounded by Pleasant Valley Road, East First Street, Shady Lane and the top of the bluffs along the north side of the Colorado River is a dramatic site bordering proposed parkland and offering panoramic views of the Colorado River Valley. These attributes make it an excellent candidate for parkside multi-family living, a use which Austinplan sector representatives and neighborhood groups have targeted as necessary and desirable for East Austin. Similar use is proposed north of East First Street to East Second east of Linden and to East Fifth between Springdale and Spencer. Convenience retail to serve the neighborhood is proposed at the southeast corner of East First Street and Pleasant Valley Road.

The unique location of the Rainey Street neighborhood, enjoying proximity to downtown and Town Lake and shaded with mature trees, deserves special sensitivity in its future planning. Careful redevelopment into mixed uses, featuring small scale shops and offices combined with residential living, is recommended. Commercial use along the neighborhood's north and east edges will remain and, at a smaller, more intimate scale, should animate the edge of Waller Creek. Once

# New Land Use Opportunities



-  Mixed Use Development
-  Multi-Family Residential
-  Neighborhood Retail

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substantial redevelopment has been accomplished, the addition of a cultural/recreational center on adjacent parkland will form a compatible neighbor.

The existing City-owned parcel at the southwest corner of Pleasant Valley Road and S. Lakeshore Drive, if not converted from PARD maintenance center to parking facilities for park visitors, is suggested to be a retail corner backed up with multi-family residential similar in scale to the surrounding neighborhood.

### Urban Design

Town Lake Park is an integral part of the larger community, a central feature whose influence will, appropriately, extend beyond its perimeter. Several guidelines are proposed to enhance its relationship with adjacent land uses, and to firmly fit Town Lake Park into its urban context.

Nine creeks emptying into Town Lake within the Corridor offer excellent opportunity to extend the park deep into the neighborhoods that surround it. The effectiveness of this type of extension is already evident along the green valleys of Barton Creek, Blunn Creek, Johnson Creek and reaches of Shoal and Waller Creeks. Future development along the creeks should build on these examples and utilize the natural features as amenities. Development along lower Shoal, Waller and E. Bouldin Creeks, for example, should include ground floor restaurant/retail activities that open up to the creek environment and provide as much public accessibility to it as is feasible. Urban residential development, a priority land use, should capture the creek character to enhance the quality of life of its residents.

Similarly, wherever private lands abut Town Lake Park, their development should feature the aesthetic advantages of the relationship and realize the opportunities it affords. The park and contiguous development should respond fully to each other and form an effective bond of shared values. Wherever possible, the interface should be open, allowing physical and/or visual access between the two, each a good neighbor to the other. Service areas and parking lots must be effectively screened from park views with plant material or fencing facing the park. Parking structures should not front on the park unless their ground floor provides amenities to park users, such as recreation or refreshment, and/or their design incorporates special architectural or landscape features that complement the park environment. Runoff of surface drainage from parking areas must be contained on-

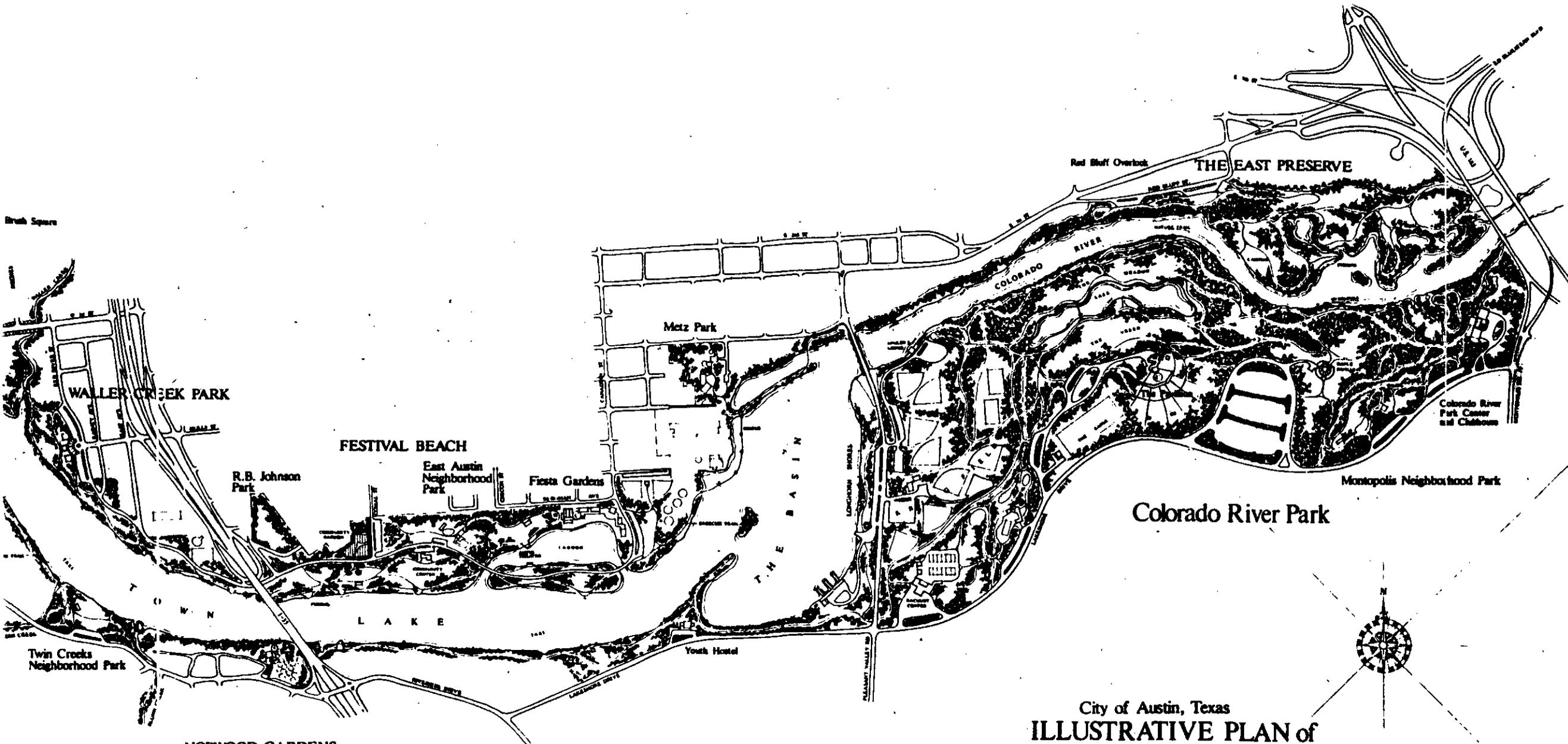
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site and not allowed to enter the parkland without effective filtration. Site and security lighting must not spill over into park property and sources of parking garage lighting should not be visible from within Town Lake Park. Noises originating on adjacent properties should be limited to levels that will not intrude on people's enjoyment of the parklands. Signage addressing the park should be limited to the name of on-site individual enterprises offering services or products directly relevant to the use and enjoyment of the park.

The park and public lands must reciprocate and, similarly, be good neighbors to private development. Service yards, parking, lighting and noise associated with park activities and operations should meet similar criteria to mitigate potential detrimental impacts upon adjacent private development.

Town Lake Park should also influence off-site public urban design, particularly in relation to the Urban Waterfront and downtown. First Street, between Shoal and Waller Creeks, should be landscaped as a promenade with wide sidewalks, large shade trees and special lighting and furniture on both the north and south sides. Overlook belvederes should extend toward Town Lake on the south. At the head of Drake Bridge, the block bordered by Guadalupe/Lavaca and First/Second Streets should be a city square, landscaped so as to extend the park into the city and form a green keystone, locking the two together. Along Guadalupe and Trinity Streets, a special streetscape character should be introduced so as to extend Town Lake Park's influence deep into downtown, connecting with Republic Square and Wooldridge Park on the west and with Brush Square on the east.

The bridges that cross Town Lake, particularly the Congress Avenue, Drake and Lamar Street bridges, should be retrofitted with wider pedestrian sidewalks and overlooks. Special lighting standards should be installed to extend their urban design quality and the significance of Town Lake into the evening hours.



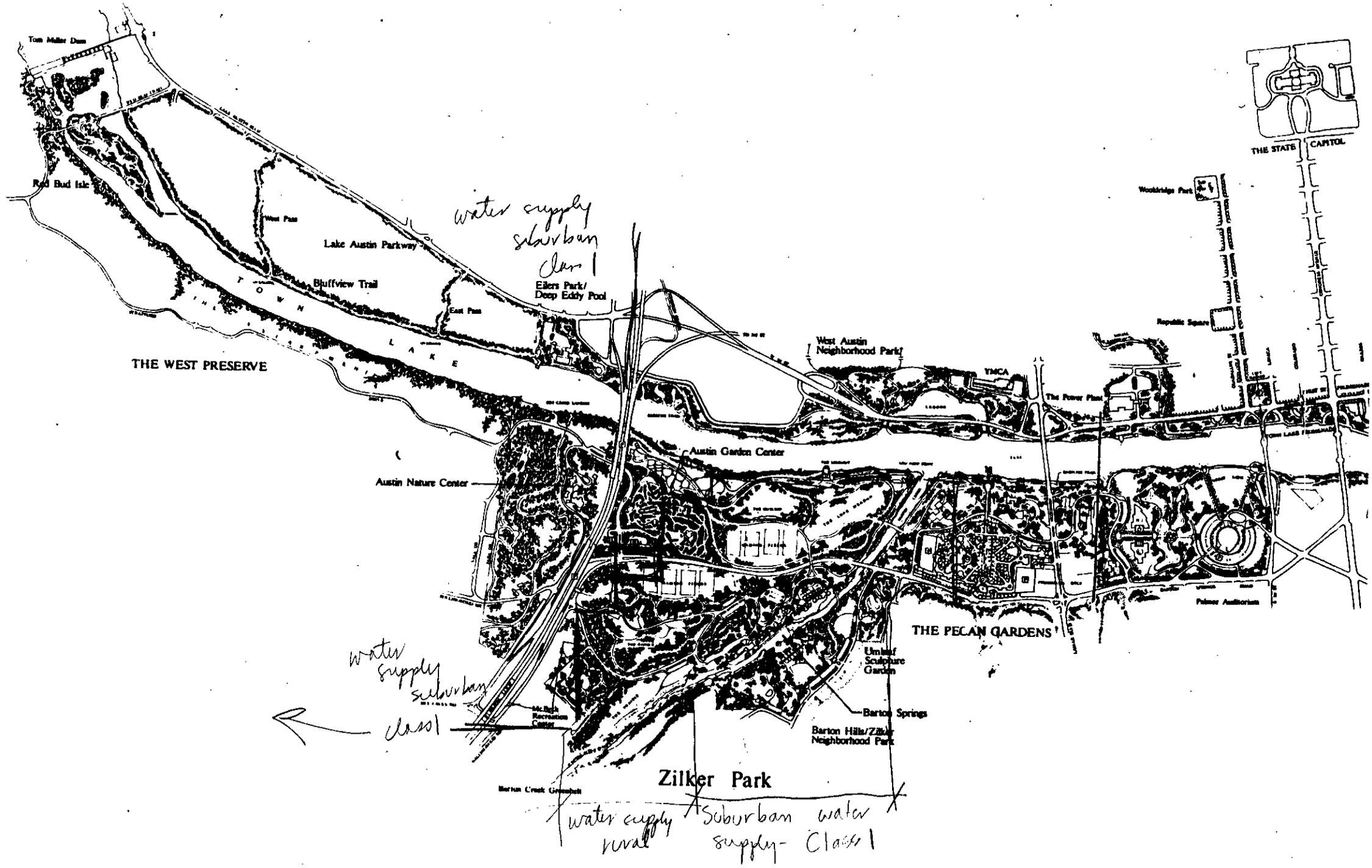
NORWOOD GARDENS

Legend


City of Austin, Texas  
 ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN of  
**TOWN LAKE PARK**

Johnson Johnson and Roy/inc.  
 Lawrence W. Speck Associates Inc.  
 November 10, 1987





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## **PLAN DESCRIPTION**

### **Mopac to Drake Bridge**

#### **South Shore - An Overview**

The principle of maximizing benefits of separate resources through their complementary combination forms the basis of the concept of "packaging" Zilker Park with the proposed Pecan Gardens and the 54 acre/Auditorium Shores parcel. Each adds value to the others through their inter-relationship.

Zilker Park is oriented to recreational pursuits and features the outstanding attraction of Barton Springs Pool. The park also includes the interpretive facilities of the Austin Nature Center and Zilker Botanical Garden. These will be complemented and reinforced in Town Lake Park by museums and cultural facilities to be clustered near Palmer Auditorium. The Tivoli Gardens-like family entertainment and dining garden proposed to be introduced at the Pecan Gardens will add yet another dimension of recreational experience. In concert, they will offer a unique opportunity for the citizens of Austin to sample recreational and cultural experiences of singular or richly varied natures - all within the heart of their community.

To strengthen these interrelationships, the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan addresses circulation and parking for this area systematically. Parking structures are introduced at each end of the combined area in two locations: under the MOPAC bridge on the west and encircling Palmer Auditorium on the east. Both facilities are intended to provide park-and-ride access to downtown during the office day and serve recreational, cultural and entertainment activity in the park during the evening and on weekends. To complement the park environment, they are designed to be terraced and landscaped to produce a "hanging garden" effect. Additional parking is accommodated in structures at the Pecan Gardens and, in small numbers for emergency, convenience and mobility-impaired needs, on surface lots at each major facility.

A wheeled shuttle transit system, or tram, is proposed to travel over designated routes within the park to link the parking structures to major recreational, cultural and entertainment destinations. The tram itself will add still another dimension to the park experience, providing comfort-





Tram in the Community Park

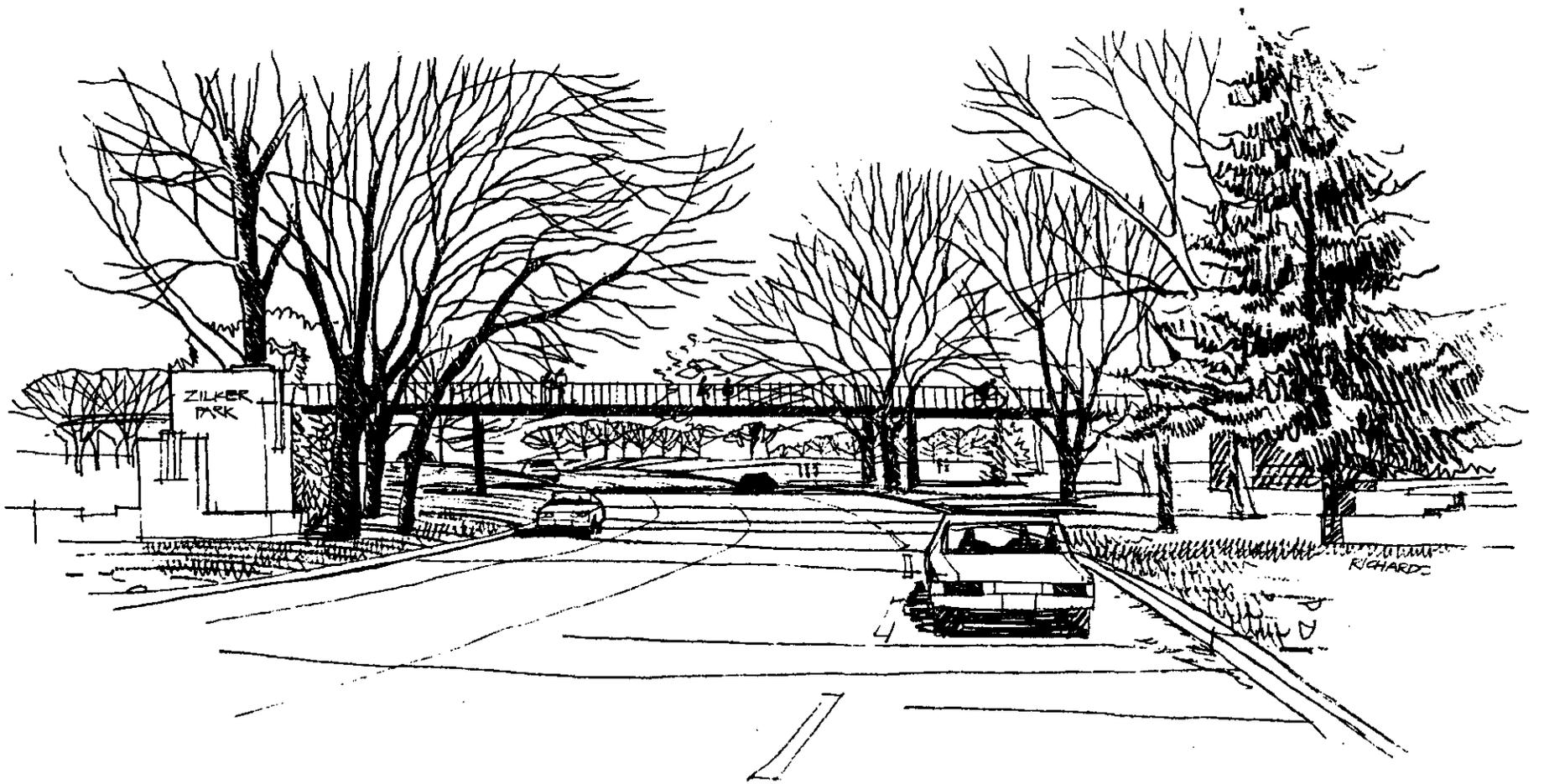
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able, scenic transit between destinations as distant as the Austin Nature Center, Barton Springs Pool and Auditorium Shores. It will substantially reduce the need for adjacent parking at popular attractions, and its interface with "Dillo" and Capital Metro bus service will make public transit a viable means of getting to the park. Finally, while possibly requiring additional time and presenting some inconvenience in reaching specific park sites, the tram with its supporting systems will protect the landscape quality of the park from otherwise inevitable obliteration by paved surfaces to satisfy ever-increasing demands for parking.

Barton Springs Road provides vehicle access to all of the proposed parking structures and major facilities at Auditorium Shores, Pecan Gardens and Zilker Park. Its route through Zilker Park has historically endangered pedestrians moving between the north and south sections of the park. After discarding removal alternatives because of the lack of east/west arterials south of Town Lake, the Plan addressed this serious problem in three ways. By replacing many scattered parking lots with the proposed parking structures and tram service, the need to cross the road on foot from available parking to another destination is reduced. By eliminating all curb cuts for Barton Springs Road within Zilker Park, the confusion of traffic turns and crossings is minimized and the safety of occasional pedestrian movement across the road is thereby enhanced. Thirdly, by introducing a graceful bridge over Barton Springs Road west of Barton Creek, a safe crossing of pedestrians, bicyclists and the tram is provided. Designed to blend with the contour and landscape of the site, the proposed bridge is viewed as a dramatic gateway to Zilker Park for west bound traffic and to central city Austin for those traveling east. A similar pedestrian/tram bridge is proposed to span Lamar Boulevard near Town Lake, linking the Pecan Gardens with Auditorium Shores.

Existing drives within Zilker Park north of Barton Springs Road are proposed to be removed in favor of more pedestrian activity and a greener landscape. The entrance to the Zilker Botanical Garden from Barton Springs Road is moved westward, almost to MOPAC.

Except for vistas to be enjoyed while driving through Zilker Park on Barton Springs Road, auto traffic in the park is restricted to a loop in the park's southern half. Comprised of existing road segments with access/egress via Columbus Drive from the MOPAC service roads, the loop presents the most wooded and rolling terrain for park rides and offers table-side parking for picnickers. Along its circumference, it provides access to McBeth Recreation Center, Barton Springs Pool and soccer fields. Short vehicular drives penetrate the Pecan Gardens and Auditorium Shores as well.



Pedestrian bridge at Barton Springs Road

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The park roads, the tramway and some segments of the path system are intended to double as bicycle routes through Zilker Park, Pecan Gardens and Auditorium Shores.

The exercise trail, a proposed modification of the Hike and Bike Trail system, travels through Zilker Park to Auditorium Shores on its route between MOPAC and Longhorn Dam. It remains, generally, in its present configuration.

The final component within the hierarchical circulation system is an extensive pattern of strolling paths which will wander through the entire park. Always shaped to the surface of the earth, aligned so as to present interesting and attractive vistas, and provided with abundant tree shade and park furnishings, the pathways will offer park strollers opportunities to get "out of the fast lane" away from the joggers and bicyclists.

#### Austin Nature Center and Zilker Botanical Garden

Projected increases in use planned for the Austin Nature Center and Zilker Botanical Garden create the opportunity for an activity anchor in the northwest quadrant of Zilker Park. Mutual benefits can be derived from the sharing of a combined entrance drive and parking facilities.

The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan proposes no alteration of the recently completed Master Plan for the Austin Nature Center; rather, it endorses and incorporates its general recommendations.

Just as the new buildings currently under construction at the Nature Center will reorient that facility toward Town Lake with vehicular access from parking under MOPAC, the Botanical Garden will be similarly reoriented to an entry point at the northwest corner of its site. A new road between Barton Springs Road and the northern parking area under MOPAC will be the major vehicular entry to parking for both the Nature Center and the Botanical Garden. Its construction will allow the closing of both the existing park road north of the Botanical Garden and the existing entrance drive, removing two very dangerous intersections on Barton Springs Road. In addition, the Botanical Garden will gain a more gracious and integral connection to Town Lake.

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The secured, most intensively developed portions of the Botanical Garden will inhabit the higher ground, with all major structures related to the gardens located there. The flatter, more open area along Town Lake will be utilized for exhibits that do not require fenced security. Because this area was previously filled haphazardly with organic material, it is less suitable for permanent, capital-intensive development. As everywhere along Town Lake, large structures should be avoided near the water's edge.

The existing Garden Center building will be retained along with its sensitively sited parking area. Its access will be reoriented, from Barton Springs Road to the new drive parallel to MOPAC. The use of the existing building will be maintained largely for garden club functions. The xeriscape garden, Japanese garden, and rose garden will function as a core from which others can grow.

The existing parking area beneath MOPAC will be redeveloped into a more efficient and attractive facility. Should future parking needs warrant, a second level of parking is proposed to be constructed beneath the bridge between Stratmore Drive and the lake. The two levels combined will accommodate 600 cars. Like a similar structure proposed to park 1200 vehicles beneath MOPAC at Columbus Drive, this structure is designed to be terraced and landscaped to complement its surroundings.

This activity anchor in the northwest corner of Zilker Park will gain vitality, not only from the Nature Center and Botanical Garden, but also from several concessions. A boat concession will give recreational water access to the western part of Town Lake with its scenic bluffs and springs. Limited food concessions, perhaps in conjunction with the Botanical Garden, will be located in a scenic spot with views to Town Lake, downtown and the gardens.

A water-taxi will stop here and link this activity node to several others along the lake. This area will also be an entry point for the tram system that will connect to all parts of Zilker Park, the Pecan Gardens and the Cultural Park at Auditorium Shores. Also, the Zilker Eagle's train route will be extended to connect with the tram station to give an alternate, kid-oriented connection between this activity center and Barton Springs Pool.

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## McBeth Recreation Center

Located on a wooded hilltop in the southernmost regions of Zilker Park, McBeth Recreation Center is a specialized facility for mobility-impaired persons. Its remoteness will be mitigated somewhat through its proximity to the new park entrance and parking facilities proposed at Columbus Drive in the Plan. Increased visibility through selective clearing and directional signage and accessibility via tram will integrate the Center more fully into Zilker Park and enhance its significance within the larger Town Lake Park system.

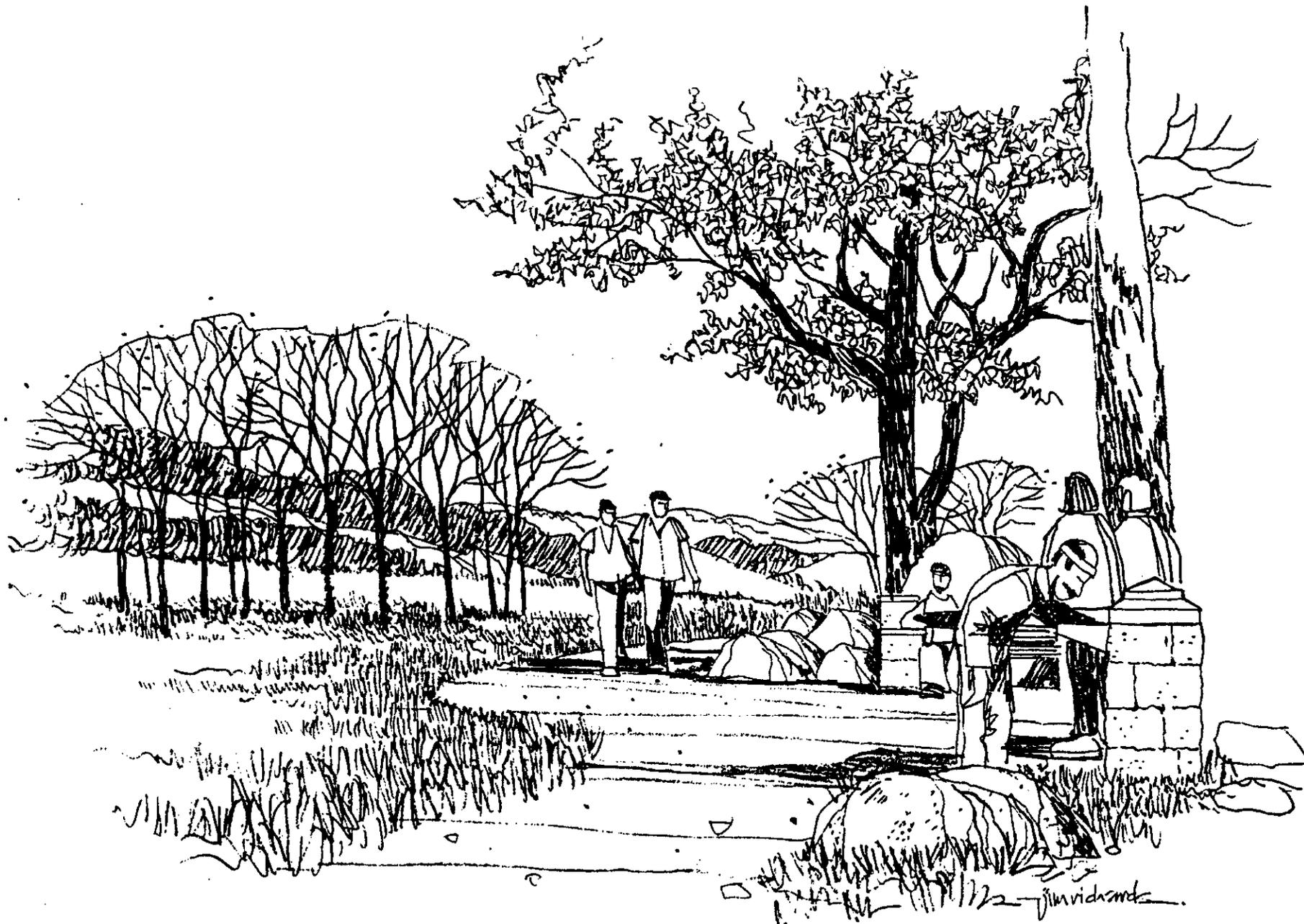
Improvements proposed for McBeth Recreation Center include a covered swimming pool, more on-site parking (restricted to the handicapped) a wheelchair accessible playscape and an outdoor basketball court. The pool structure, playscape and basketball court are to be sited on the edges of the existing lawn area, saving this open space for its passive recreational and scenic value. A hard-surfaced trail system with grades and surfaces designed to accommodate wheelchair athletes will weave through the dense woods and along a dramatic rock outcropping. The trail will also facilitate wheelchair access to and from Barton Springs Pool.

## Central Zilker

With the Austin Nature Center, Zilker Botanical Garden, McBeth Recreation Center and Barton Springs Pool as a ring of activities around its edges, Central Zilker is more open and less intensely developed than its perimeter. Generally focused to the north upon Town Lake, the area is bisected by Barton Springs Road but united visually through its landscape and physically by the proposed pedestrian/tram bridge.

Within its southern segment, picnicking, sight-seeing and strolling are the predominant activities. These leisure activities are especially suited to the rolling terrain and heavy woods and are less threatening than other uses might be to the natural environment featured here.

Open fields for soccer flank the south and north sides of Barton Springs Road as it travels through Zilker Park. Other outdoor "rooms" formed by the proposed tree massing provide unstructured open space necessary to accommodate any number of pleasurable passive social and recreational activities within their scenic meadows and wooded edges. Some, such as the one immediately



Strolling path in central Zilker Park

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north of the rock outcropping in the north central zone of Zilker Park, will act as outdoor theatres for occasional low-amplification concerts and plays. A portable stage with acoustical shell that is easily erected and dismantled is proposed to be moved to sites such as this, Auditorium Shores and others throughout Town Lake Park to extend the cultural/entertainment programs along its entire corridor and to avoid turf deterioration from overuse of any single location.

The Hillside Theatre's accommodating topography, solar orientation, tall shade trees and location in one of the most scenic areas of Zilker Park have all helped to produce a tradition of outdoor theatrical performances on this site cherished by many Austinites. The Plan recommends its renovation with more accommodating stage and support spaces, making it one of many available outdoor performance sites.

The Zilker Eagle Railroad, long a favorite attraction for children, is proposed to remain, though with an extended route and minor alignment revisions. To eliminate the potential hazard that exists where the train travels through the children's playscape, the Plan proposes to reroute the tracks to a parallel route immediately east of their present location, skirting the east edge of the playscape, proposed restaurant and lawn/court game areas. Passing under the proposed pedestrian/tram bridge and through its existing crossing beneath Barton Springs Road, it will continue northward along its present alignment and eventually terminate at the parking structure proposed below MOPAC at Town Lake. This revised alignment will offer extensive views of Town Lake and the Austin skyline to the train's riders while retaining its fortuitous relationships to the existing playscape, concessions, and Barton Springs Pool.

The plateau of the Central Zilker area continues northward to the shore of Town Lake, approaching it at an elevation 35 feet above the water. While physical access to the shore is limited to Lou Neff Point, visual access is afforded with vistas to and over the lake from within the park as well as from trails paralleling the water's edge at this higher elevation. Occasional overlooks are sited at opportune locations for panoramic viewing.

#### Barton Springs Pool Area

Historically the most frequented site in Zilker Park, Barton Springs Pool is a rare and exciting recreational attraction. Its cool, spring-fed water offers welcome relief from Austin's warm

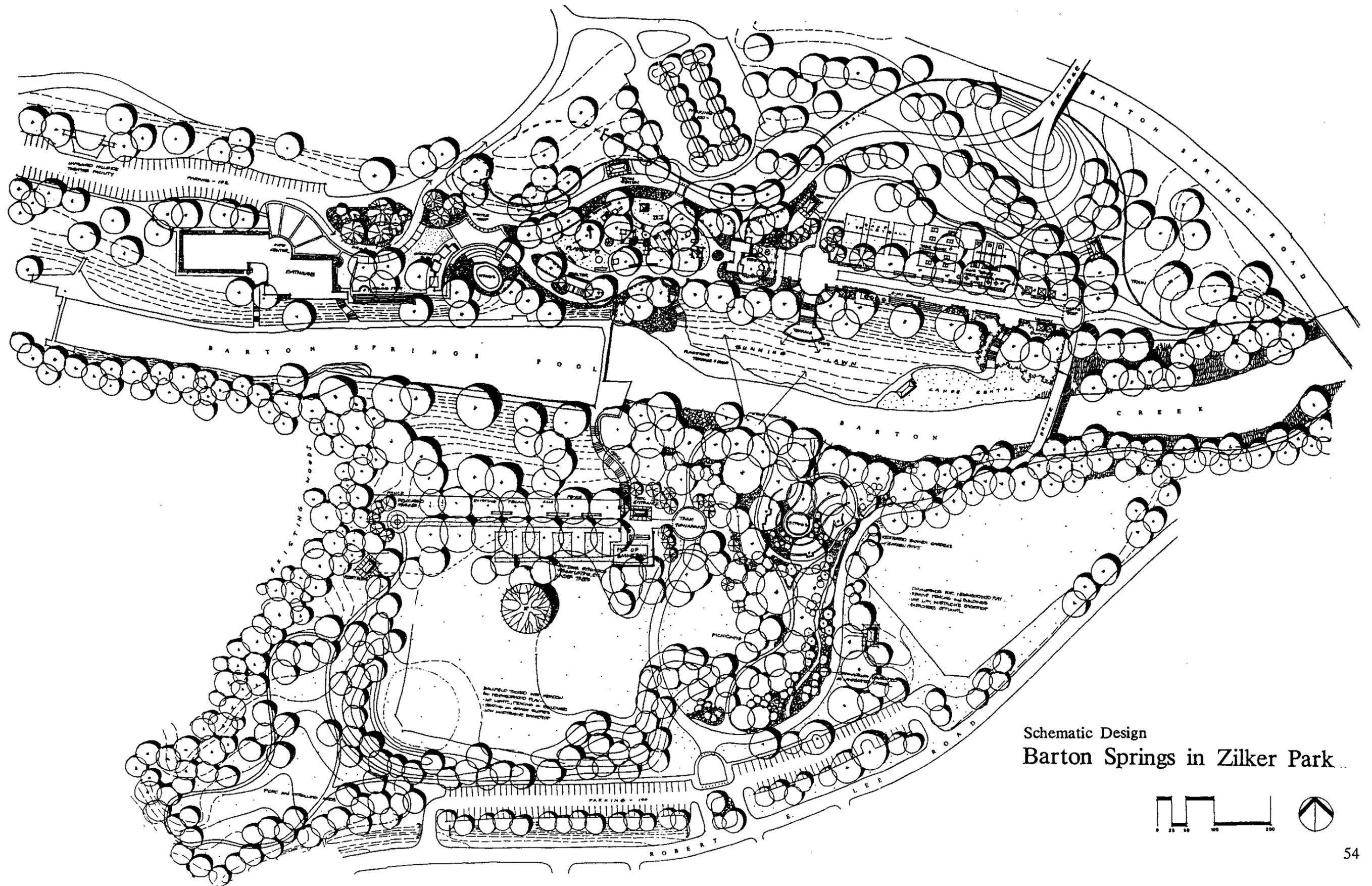
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summer temperatures. Sensitively sited in the creek valley among stone ledges and pecan trees that characterize central Texas' Hill Country, perhaps its only shortcoming is its limited size. The pool's popularity exceeds its capacity both for swimming and "rafting" in the water and for pool-side sunbathing and people-watching on shore. While environmental factors preclude expansion of the pool itself, an unfenced sunning lawn is proposed to be extended downstream from the pool along the north shore of the creek. A pedestrian/tram bridge at the far end of the expanded lawn will link the two sides together and facilitate additional access to the pool area from the east side of the creek.

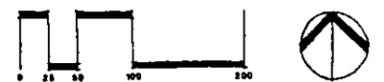
The arrival area to the Bathhouse is proposed to remain in its basic existing configuration but enhanced in its character. The forecourt between the building and the concession stand will be partially surfaced with stone, furnished with seating, lighting and signage elements, and shaded with additional tree cover.

A small restaurant concession featuring an outdoor dining terrace with views to the sunning lawn and Barton Creek is suggested to occupy the present caretaker's home north of the pool. Opening this structure and its immediate surroundings to public activity will better utilize its attractive qualities and introduce alternative food service for visitors. The existing playscape immediately adjacent to the proposed restaurant is to be retrofitted with new, improved and safer apparatus. New lawn/court games such as sand volleyball, horseshoes, and outdoor table tennis will occupy the open space on the opposite, north, side of the building. The existing maintenance facility which presently occupies this site is proposed to be relocated from the heart of the park to parkland immediately west of MOPAC and south of Rollingwood Drive.

A promenade formed by a dramatic, formal alle' of existing pecan trees extends north-eastward from the proposed restaurant and separates the lawn/court game area on one side from the new sunning lawn along Barton Creek on the other. Lined with benches and outdoor game tables, its terminus is the springboard for the proposed pedestrian/tram bridge over Barton Springs Road, the Zilker tram turnaround and a new bridge across the creek. The Group Picnic area will remain in its present location, with some tables repositioned to accommodate the realignment of the Zilker Eagle tracks. The canoe concession will be near at hand as well. The new bridge will provide access for pedestrians, bicyclists and the park tram to the land area east of the creek. Viewed from the opposite direction, it will open up access to the remainder of Zilker Park from new entrance facilities consisting of reorganized parking, the tram turnaround and a redesigned pool entrance. The restored Sunken Gardens are to be incorporated in the entrance design as a feature with lush plantings, seating and



Schematic Design  
Barton Springs in Zilker Park



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strolling paths. Most of the remaining land area east of Barton Springs Pool is designated in the Plan as a Neighborhood Park for the Barton Hills/Zilker residents. As such, it will be redesigned as scenic open space with wooded edges and outfitted with facilities for family picnicking, childrens' play and field recreation.

### The Pecan Gardens

One of the most ambitious and exciting new proposals in the Comprehensive Plan involves extensive redevelopment of the area bounded by Barton Creek on the west, Town Lake on the north, Lamar Boulevard on the east, and Barton Springs Road on the south. Located at the confluence of the two most scenic waterways in the study area and at the intersection of north-south and east-west vehicular arteries, this district offers unique and important opportunities. The presence of what is commonly referred to as the "Pecan Grove", an extensive, mature grid of beautiful pecan trees, adds additional impetus for careful development here.

The area is currently a mixture of public and private land uses. Public uses in the area include Butler Shores, (one of the most beautiful stretches of lake frontage in the Corridor), Zachary Scott Theatre, PARD headquarters, a transportation department maintenance facility and several sports fields. Left to market forces, the area will be significantly redeveloped in the next economic cycle. The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan proposes to combine public goals with private enterprise to the mutual benefit of both through the establishment of a master plan and joint public/private development of the Pecan Gardens.

This proposal has three major goals. One is to establish a critical connection between Zilker Park to the west of the district and the newly dedicated 54 acres of parkland and Auditorium Shores to the east. This connection will establish a two-mile long lakeside park on the south shore of Town Lake and bring together a broad range of park types (from Preserve to Cultural Park) and park activities (from hiking and nature trails to museums and performance places). The series of parks, all interconnected by trams, bike paths and pedestrian trails, will provide the mix of recreational resources that have proven to be important and valuable assets in the other livable American cities.

The second goal of the Pecan Gardens is to establish an area close to Town Lake where festive, intensive activity can occur without adversely impacting the serenity and beauty of park areas

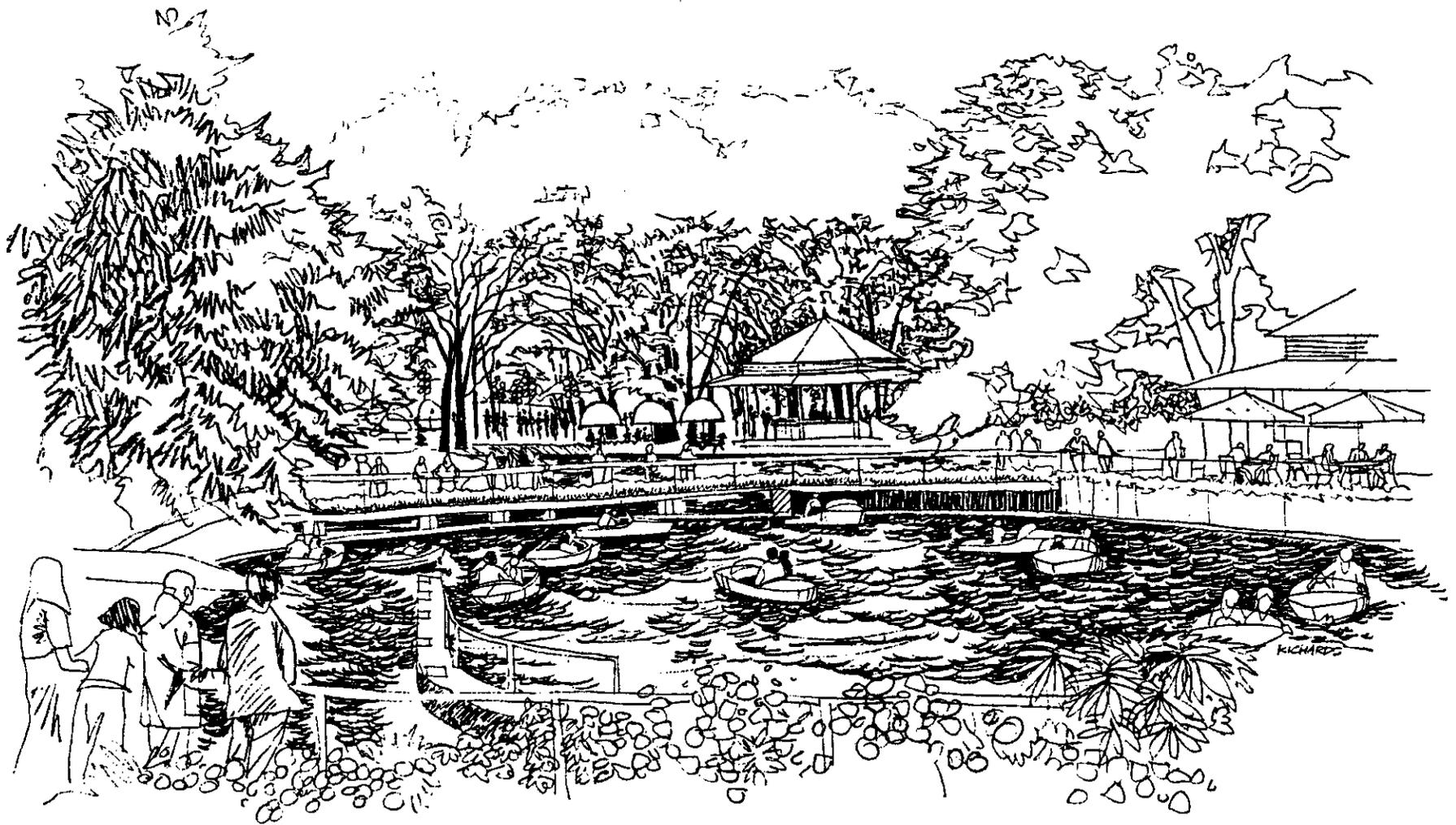
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already treasured by Austinites. Although in the public participation phases of the study many citizens advocated the presence of restaurants, places for regular entertainment and family-oriented amusements in the Corridor, existing park land was almost universally deemed inappropriate for these purposes. The Pecan Gardens area already has a good start at addressing such needs. Zachary Scott Theatre offers the only permanent performance stage currently in the Corridor. The theatre's plans for expanding existing facilities present opportunities for extending their influence. There are already a large number of existing establishments in the area. Although most of these have no supportive relationships to each other or to the park, several could, with minor alteration, become an early core for the new concept. More than any other area in the Corridor, this one offers opportunities for the vital spontaneous eating/entertainment/amusement district that many citizens have envisioned.

The third goal of the Pecan Gardens is to preserve the existing pecan groves, to make them more available for public enjoyment and to encourage compatible private development in this important stretch of Town Lake frontage. Pecan trees are a characteristic and highly-valued natural feature of Austin. This grove, one of the most extensive and beautiful in the region, would take decades to replicate. Along with the regular row of pecan trees that borders Barton Springs Road to the east (near Palmer Auditorium) and to the west (through part of Zilker Park), these uniform pecan stands will offer a distinctive signature for Town Lake Park. When stripped of the competitive visual noise around them, they will give Barton Springs Road a strong park-like character and will extend that character in an appropriate gesture north toward Town Lake.

With the pecan groves as its central visual focus, the Pecan Gardens will be a collection of 20-25 eating establishments ranging from fine restaurants to informal eateries, 8-10 specialty shops, 2-3 exhibition spaces, 20 or so amusement/entertainment features and participatory education areas especially for children. Several performance places accommodating music, dance and theatre range in size from 250 seats to a 2500 seat outdoor concert facility. The setting of the Pecan Gardens will be landscape-dominated with lagoons and floral displays which, along with the grand promenades between the rows of pecan trees, will give a lush and lively feeling to the place.

A major ceremonial axis will extend from a "front door" on Barton Springs Road through the Pecan Gardens to a water-taxi stop on Town Lake. Eateries, performance places and museums will surround the central pecan grove. Except for the Parks and Recreation Building and the existing Zachary Scott Theatre, most of the buildings in the Pecan Gardens will be held back from the lake frontage, allowing the natural bank to make a transition from the lively Pecan Gardens to the



Amusements area in the Pecan Gardens

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more peaceful lake edge. The Zachary Scott Theatre will remain and possibly expand on its existing site. Assuming the possible future relocation of PARD offices to a municipal office complex or other public facility, the Parks and Recreation Building would become a candidate for adaptive reuse as a cultural facility. Parking for the Pecan Gardens will be located at southeast and southwest corners of the parcel (initially on grade, eventually in parking structures) with access off both Barton Springs Road and Lamar Boulevard.

The Pecan Gardens will play an important part in extending the role of Town Lake Park to evening and nighttime uses as well as daytime ones. Dramatic and festive lighting -- particularly emphasizing the pecan trees -- will make it as beautiful at night as it is during the day.

The Pecan Gardens will become an important attraction in Austin's developing tourism industry as well as a popular attraction for its own citizens. There are no comparable developments in Texas that mix a scenic environment, entertainment, restaurants and family-oriented institutions in this way. The San Antonio River Walk contains scenic and restaurant elements but has always been constrained by its downtown location in adding other potentially complementary elements. Six Flags Over Texas and Astroworld address the family-oriented amusement elements of this proposal with some entertainment, but their isolation and their overtly commercial rather than public character again put them in a different category. The nature of the Pecan Gardens is designed to reflect a particular quality of Austin as a city. Its focus on the pecan groves, its limited scale, its integration with adjacent parks and Town Lake, and its orientation to music and performance will all make the Pecan Gardens unique to Austin. It will provide a particular amenity that visitors cannot find in their own home towns and that will evoke special memories of Austin.

#### Auditorium Shores

Auditorium Shores, including the recently dedicated 54 acres of contiguous parkland, is proposed to be a focus of Austin's cultural and interpretive facilities. This Cultural Park is envisioned as a setting for the placement of individual institutions united in their goals to enrich the cultural resources of the community. It will also accommodate outdoor assemblies for special events, such as the traditional Fourth of July concert and similar gatherings. Removal of the deteriorated retaining walls and their replacement with new topsoil and irrigation will improve the site's ability to accommodate occasional large crowds without extensive turf damage. To mitigate potential impacts

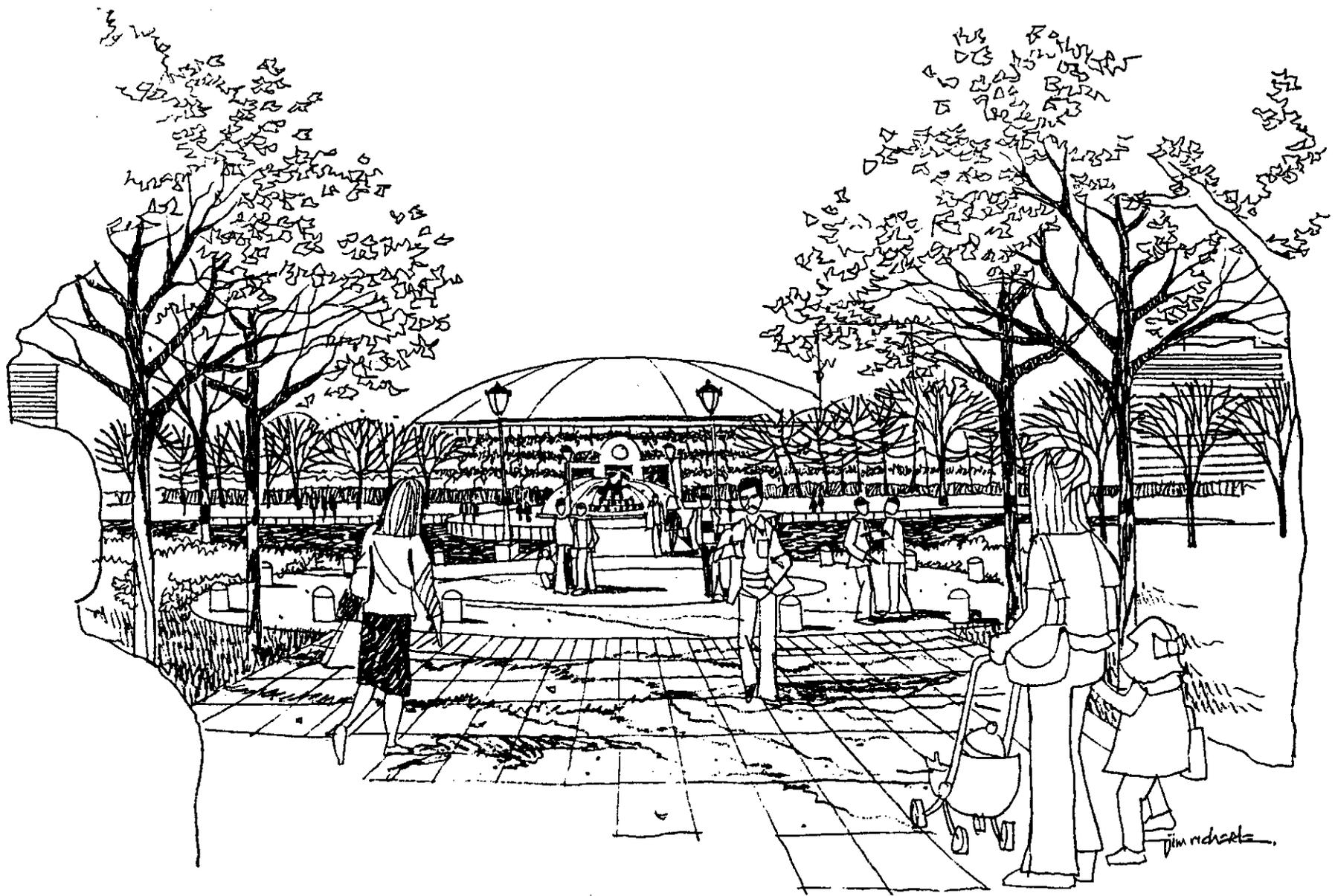
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upon adjacent neighborhoods, enforceable policies regarding special events will need to restrict parking on residential streets, limit noise levels through acoustic technology, set acceptable curfew times and provide neighborhood security.

Palmer Auditorium, the area's most visible feature, will complement the cultural focus with performances, shows and events. Its parking, currently spread over most of the landscape, will be collected and accommodated in a gracefully terraced and richly landscaped structure surrounding all but the lake side of the auditorium. Riverside Drive is proposed to be vacated and its alignment abandoned through the site. The present road will terminate into the new parking structure. While a traffic impact analysis of this improvement is recommended, preliminary indications from the City's transportation department reveal no major concerns with the change. The open lawn that welcomes the lake environment up to the auditorium will be renovated and its existing oak-lined edges reinforced with additional plantings.

Sites for future museums and/or theatres are suggested on the west side of the Cultural Park, in an area currently occupied by the Coliseum and Dougherty Art Center. A park road links the sites together, providing convenience parking, and continues under the railroad bridge to additional sites facing Lamar Boulevard.

Between the cultural institutions and Palmer Auditorium, a lagoon is introduced to enhance the museum settings, afford additional recreational opportunity and mitigate the site's micro climate. As importantly, the lagoon will extend the visual perception of Town Lake nearer to Barton Springs Road to incorporate its significance into views of downtown's skyline from this significant artery. The lagoon's curving form is designed to give the visual impression of a much larger body of water. It is crossed twice by lighted bridges, graceful and refined in their design character. One of the bridges is proposed to incorporate the East Bouldin Creek flood bypass structure into its structural design, using this potentially formidable site constraint to advantage. Portions of the lagoon area adjacent to the museums are intended to exhibit intimate landscape details, such as colorful planting beds and finely crafted paving details, not found anywhere else in Town Lake Park but frequently associated with cultural park character. A wide promenade formed by an alle' of trees west of the lagoon reinforces the park's more formal character, forming a strong visual axis terminated by a large sculptural fountain east of the lagoon. The fountain also serves as a dramatic visual focal point for visitors entering the park from the proposed parking structure at Palmer Auditorium.



The Cultural Park at Auditorium Shores

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Prior to any significant park development of the 54 acres around Palmer Auditorium, the approximately 2000 on-grade parking spaces which currently dominate the site must be replaced. Parking accommodations of this scale are necessary to service the auditorium and are currently well-utilized for park-and-ride and for Auditorium Shores special events parking as well. The Plan envisions this parking facility, the subject of a separate schematic design study, as one of two major parking anchors which would be served by trams, giving access to the large park system which will stretch from South First Street to MOPAC with a minimum of intermediate on-site parking.

The parking facility is designed to achieve construction economy, visual unobtrusiveness, and ease of access from the multiple functions it must serve. A relatively high water table and occupied easements across the site make an underground facility uneconomical and infeasible. The enormous bulk of the required space would create an unfortunate visual intrusion into the new park if configured as a conventional multi-story rectilinear garage. The proposed solution compliments the geometry of the auditorium and blends with existing topography to create a structure which not only minimizes its own impact but which also softens the scale of Palmer Auditorium in relation to the park.

The new facility wraps rings of parking around three-quarters of the full circle of the auditorium. The remaining one-quarter of the building's face is open to views of Auditorium Shores, Town Lake and downtown. A court at the existing podium level fills the 80 foot wide space between the garage and auditorium. The arc of mature trees ringing the north and east sides of the building will remain to occupy the center of the court which will be available for outdoor display, receptions and events.

Parking is located on four levels. The lowest level at about the same grade as the existing surface parking contains three concentric rings of double-loaded parking lanes. All of the rings are covered and are lit and ventilated by continuous light wells at the perimeter. This level, entered from Barton Springs Road, also accommodates a double height service access leading to an existing loading area which has been enlarged significantly to allow more space for service vehicle turn-around and parking of tall or oversized equipment. Covered bus and "Dillo" access and drop-off areas are in the double-height portion of this level as well.

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The second level of the facility likewise has three concentric rings of parking, two covered and one open. Entered directly from both Barton Springs Road and South First Street, its grade is approximately the same as the existing podium around the auditorium. This level accommodates a double height service access which leads to the exiting stage loading dock and connects to the court between the parking structure and the auditorium to facilitate the display of very large items such as boats or cars.

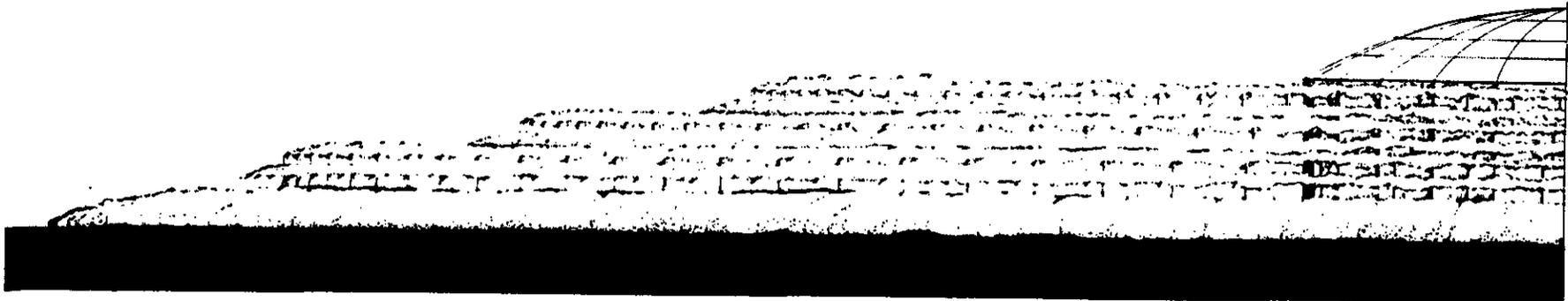
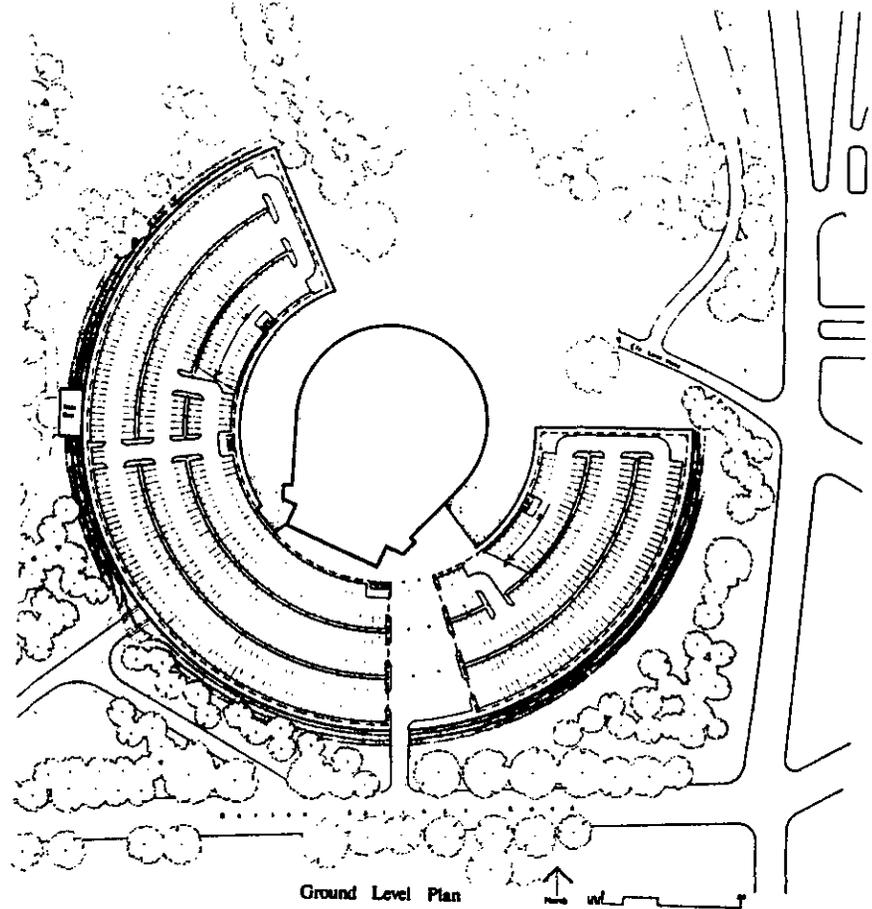
The third level of parking is terraced back from the lower two and contains only two rings of parking -- one covered and one open. The fourth level continues that pattern of terracing with one uncovered ring of parking. Four stair/elevator cores bring pedestrians down from the third and fourth levels to the courtyard where they can conveniently enter the auditorium or move through the courtyard to events on Auditorium Shores.

Vehicular movement through the facility is all two-way with continuous access to all parking spaces from each of the entrances and all other parking spaces. There are no "dead-end" parking areas. Vertical transitions are made via ramps with 5% grades.

From the exterior the facility will be a "non-building". The first level will be tucked behind an earth berm which will extend existing topographical conditions. The upper levels, as they terrace back, will be sheathed in a web of vegetation to create a "hanging gardens" effect surrounding and softening the auditorium. With a minimum of soil area, an automatically regulated watering system, and a carefully selected plant material, the structure will be more "park" than "parking garage" in appearance. In addition, the vined trellises will shade parked cars from Austin's hot summer sun.

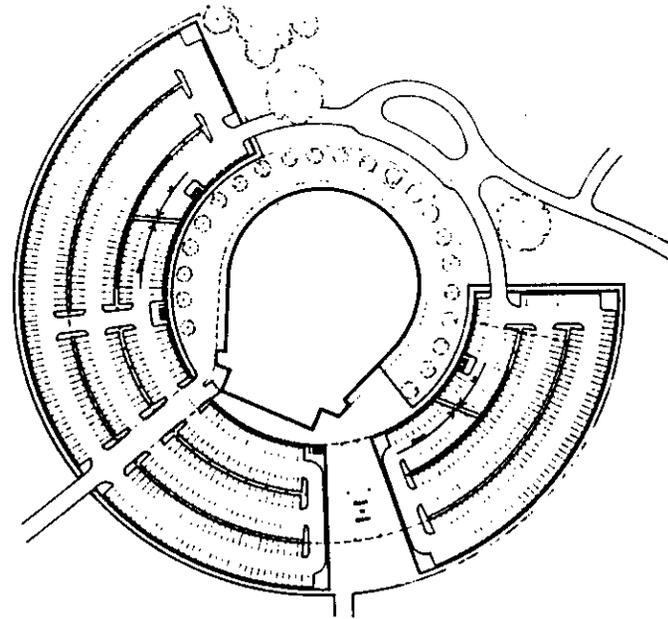
This proposal converts a potentially obtrusive site necessity into a feature which will actually enhance the character of the park. The new structure and its vegetation will be a visually exciting element with terraces giving richness to the ground plain and flowering vines adding color and seasonal variability. The impact of the large, unrelieved vertical surfaces of Palmer Auditorium (especially the massive brick fly-loft) will be significantly mitigated.

# Parking Structure: Palmer Auditorium

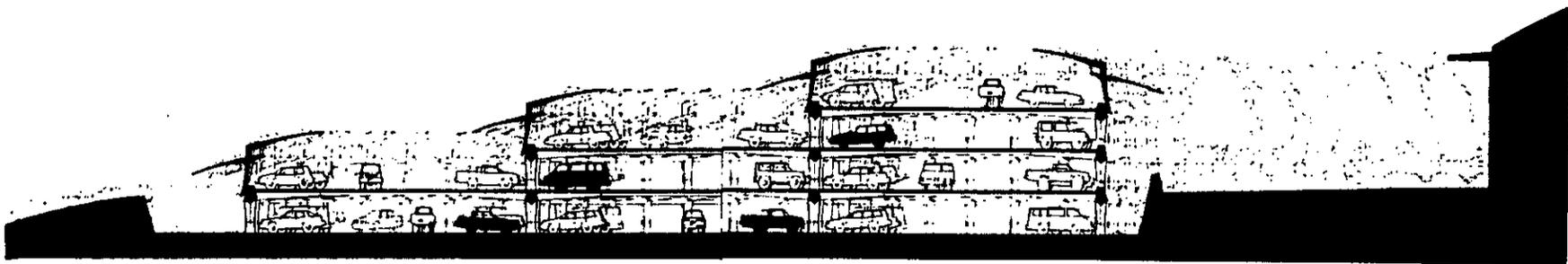


Elevation

# Parking Structure: Palmer Auditorium



Second Level Plan



Section

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The availability of convenient, pleasantly lit and pedestrian-scaled parking in the midst of the park will make the park itself more available, not only for park users, but also for use by commuters using park-and-ride facilities.

#### North Shore: Lamar Boulevard to Shoal Creek

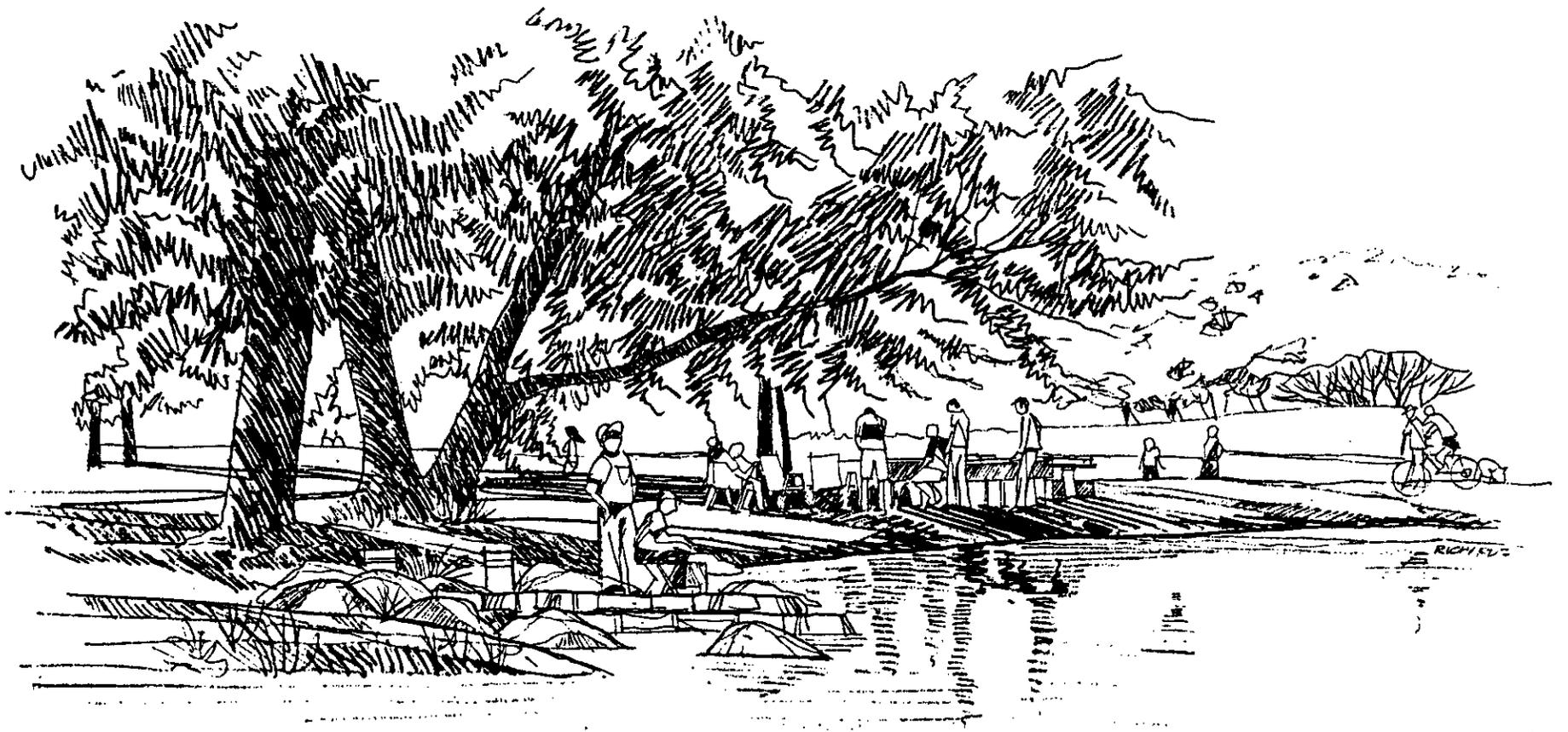
The City-owned power generation facility offers two long-range potentials for increased recreational/social activity in the Town Lake Corridor when its power generation functions are replaced through the construction of new plants in other locations. The main building, a formidable structure, encloses large-volumed spaces adaptable to other, more publicly-accessible uses. Large enough to accommodate a festival market, food market, museum or theatre, its nearness to downtown and to Town Lake suggest that it be converted into an activity center complementary to the area. In the event that the railroad is eventually abandoned, utilization of the railroad bridges to gain pedestrian/tram access to and from the cultural, entertainment and recreational activities on the south side of Town Lake will warrant investigation.

Additionally, the building south of W. First Street that houses the cooling water intake for the power plant is ideally situated for conversion to lakeside dining. Site limitations will require valet or remote parking served by special transit. If parking were to be located at the main power plant across the street, a signalized pedestrian crossing will be needed. A water taxi stop will give additional access.

Adaptive reuse of the power plant and intake structures for cultural/entertainment and dining facilities will potentially encourage compatible private development along the lower reach of Shoal Creek as it approaches Town Lake. Ideally, development of this zone of downtown will include residential living.

#### West Austin and Lamar Beach

The marshy outlet of Johnson Creek immediately east of the MOPAC bridge creates a desirable habitat for wildlife that is worthy of preservation. Accordingly, the path system will be maintained close to the high school access drive to avoid any conflict or impact.



Neighborhood Park on Lagoon

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The open, flat fields of Austin High School and their shallow elevation above the lake level suggest their appropriateness for occasional, off school season events, such as neighborhood bazaars or arts and crafts fairs oriented to activity on the lake. The lakeside itself will be enhanced with additional landscaping and possibly provided with a boat rental concession.

In anticipation of an alternative access route to downtown from MOPAC, the Plan assumes no significant increase in traffic volumes, and no pavement widening, of W. First Street. It recommends its disengagement from MOPAC in favor of an alternative route. If connected solely to Lake Austin Boulevard, W. First Street then functions as a secondary access and as part of the circumferential park road around Town Lake.

Assuming these future conditions and, further, that safe pedestrian access from West Austin neighborhoods will be incorporated into the alternative access road's construction, that portion of Town Lake Park north of W. First Street will be largely devoted to Neighborhood Park use. Its actual development will need to await the suitable replacement of existing ball fields in a new location and relocation of the Austin Humane Society Animal Shelter. An off-stream lagoon, similar in size to the one at Festival Beach, will provide opportunities for fishing and model-boat sailing and will buffer Neighborhood Park activities from the street traffic and the lakeside Community Park immediately to the south on Lamar Beach. Canals connecting both ends of the lagoon to Town Lake will facilitate water quality and cleansing action.

The YMCA just west of Lamar Boulevard offers recreational facilities and activities that are very complementary to the park. Integration of the two through a major "front yard" open space, strong path system connections and the careful location of conveniences that can serve both constituents, such as food concessions and community bulletin boards, will enhance this fortuitous relationship.

### **Drake Bridge to Interstate 35**

#### **South Shore/Drake Bridge to E. Bouldin Creek**

Continuity of public access along the shores of Town Lake will require the acquisition of easements or public ownership of properties along the shoreline. Certain properties, most notably



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the Hyatt Hotel and the Austin American Statesman, have provided for the Hike and Bike Trail to continue along the lakeside. The Hyatt Hotel has also responded to its frontage on a public resource by providing facilities and amenities for passers-by. Boating concessions in the vicinity add to the life and vitality of the waterfront.

In areas where public access is not already accommodated, public easements or ownership should be secured in the future. In addition to the embankment along the lake's edge, a nominal dimension of fifty feet back from the edge of the embankment is recommended to accommodate the exercise trail and strolling paths. Detailed on-site observation may vary the dimensions according to natural and built features. Occasional rest stops and overlooks will punctuate the path alignment and landscaping will enhance its character. Access between the path and adjacent private development is encouraged.

#### Twin Creeks Park

The proximity of E. Bouldin Creek and Blunn Creek as they enter Town Lake lend special significance to the land area between them. Blunn Creek is already a circulation conduit leading residents to Town Lake from neighborhoods sharing its upstream park system. It requires only a functional pedestrian underpass at Riverside Drive and a terminus at the lake's edge to realize its full potential. Parallel improvement of E. Bouldin Creek south of Riverside Drive, perhaps more commercially developed with creekside patio dining and comparable development, will serve neighborhoods further west. Their merged juncture at Town Lake is an appropriate focus for public parkland. Improvements will include provision for neighborhood picnicking, recreation and play and substantial landscaping.

#### Norwood Estate

Recently acquired by the City of Austin for use as parkland, the Norwood Estate occupies a promontory which offers one of the most dramatic views of Town Lake and downtown Austin available in the city. Located at the critical intersection of Town Lake and IH-35, the site is one of the most visible in the Corridor.

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The house, built by one of Austin's most prominent citizens of the 1920's, originally stood toward the center of its grounds, surrounded by gardens over-looking the swimming pool below and to the east. Although not old enough to qualify as "historic", it is a fine example of the bungalow style which was prevalent in Austin in the early part of the century.

Several years ago, the house was moved to the perimeter of the site and has not been used since. A group of citizens in the adjacent Travis Heights neighborhood has begun a movement to raise funds to move the house back to its original site and to rehabilitate it. The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan supports its relocation and rehabilitation as a small meeting/gathering facility much like the popular Zilker Clubhouse. Activities will be limited to those that can be accommodated in the modest sized space of the house and adjoining porches and terraces. Limited parking for such gatherings will be located unobtrusively among the large trees in a low draw to the east of the pool.

The pool itself will also be rehabilitated. Fed by natural warm springs, the pool could be an attractive amenity for general public use, but its high visibility and accessibility create the potential for significant overuse. Opportunities will be sought to open the pool for limited use only -- perhaps for off-season swimmers, seniors or for therapeutic swimming. In any event, its scenic qualities will contribute to the character of the grounds. Fencing and other accommodations necessary to make the private pool usable for more public purposes will be complementary or unobtrusive.

The development of the Norwood Estate will restore the qualities of the original estate -- its spaciousness, its grace and its orientation to the water and the city. Although its location adjacent to the highest traffic carrier in Austin may tempt more intense usage, acknowledgment of the site's small size and its vulnerable scale must prevail. Its development must maintain compatibility with the adjacent residential neighborhood and avoid extensive vehicular access.

#### North Shore: Rainey Street Area

The Rainey Street neighborhood has been the focus of considerable attention in the past decade, most notably for efforts to preserve its historic character and its Mexican-American legacy. Despite these considerable efforts, this once-thriving neighborhood has experienced physical deterioration. Only 36 houses, fewer than half of which are owner-occupied, remain in the neigh-

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borhood today. South of River Street, the land is virtually vacant except for large stands of mature pecan trees.

Significantly, the Rainey Street Neighborhood Association has recently abandoned its preservation stance in favor of redevelopment at a higher intensity. The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan endorses this position and recommends careful redevelopment into mixed uses featuring small scale shops and offices combined with residential living. Commercial activity should animate the edge of Waller Creek, and the mature trees that shade the neighborhood should be protected so that they continue to dominate the character of the area.

All the land south of River Street is proposed to be acquired and dedicated as parkland to protect its pecan forest and enhance the neighborhood. Similarly, the City's Street and Bridge Yard will be better used as parkland than for its present function. The site's situation high above Town Lake offers dramatic vistas up the river.

After the neighborhood redevelopment patterns are established, a cultural facility in the park will expand this site's unique assets. A facility that might profit from its relationship to Sixth Street, a short distance away, by way of Waller Creek, and from the splendid views up the lake to the west would be most appropriate.

A park road linking Red River Street, lower Rainey Street and Waterfront Street continuing under I-35 will take full advantage of the dramatic views and add to the pleasure of a scenic park drive.

### The Urban Waterfront

Originally conceived to be the capitol city of Texas from perspectives viewed from the Colorado River near what would become Congress Avenue, downtown Austin's relationship to the water deserves special significance. The City's history, both in the past and more recently, has produced notable urban design features worthy of mention and emulation. Buford Tower's landmark stature lends a special quality to the edge of downtown as it meets the waterfront. Nearby, public ownership of the "square" at the head of Drake Bridge offers the city the potential to "receive" Town Lake Park and, through it, the broader community in a welcoming gesture with strong landscape

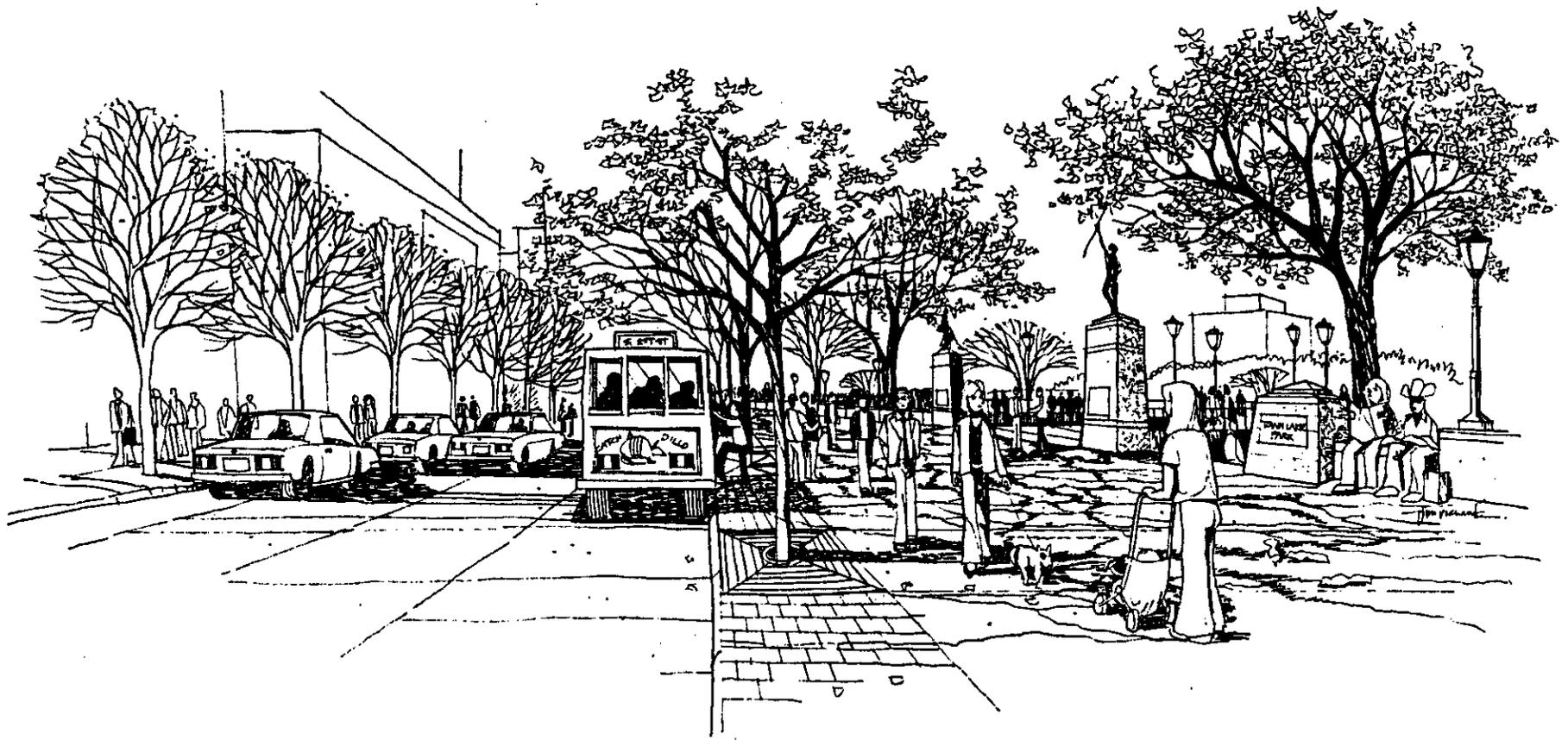
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design and an architectural or sculptural focal point. Immediately west of Congress Avenue, the streetscape character on the north side of W. First Street extends the landscape/pedestrian values of the park across the traffic artery and effectively knits the visual character of downtown and parkland together. The dramatic, civic scale of the Congress Avenue streetscape improvements further forge this linkage. On the east side of Congress Avenue the integration of private development with public use, resulting in added public lakeside amenities, serves as an example of the concept of joint public/private partnerships that deserves continued application and refinement.

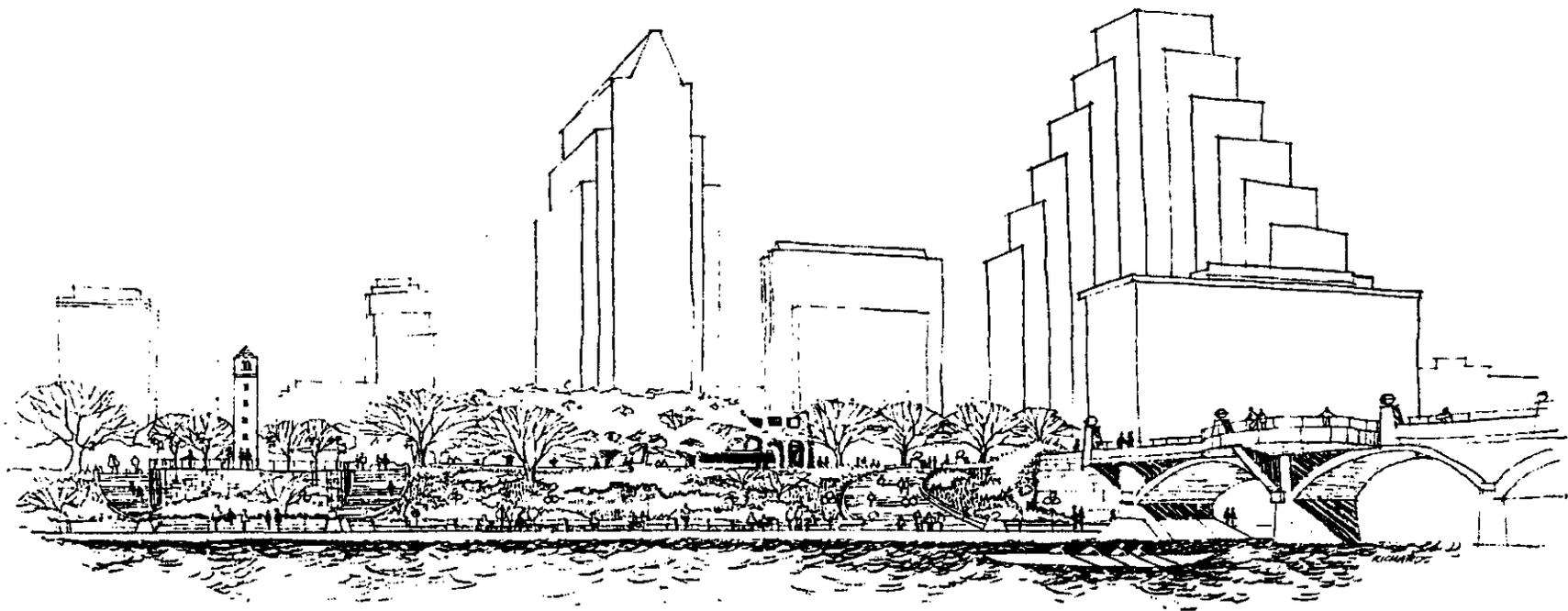
Building on these assets, the Plan proposes a singular urban character for that portion of the lakefront between Shoal Creek and Waller Creek. First Street throughout this reach is viewed as a civic promenade flanked with wide tree-shaded sidewalks on both sides and furnished with special lighting, pavement and furniture. A similar though more modest streetscape character will penetrate perpendicularly into downtown along Guadalupe and Trinity Streets.

The sidewalk on the south (park) side of the First Street Promenade will be punctuated with belvederes, semi-circular pedestrian terraces extending into the parkland at its upper (First Street) level and bordered with low stone walls topped with ornamental iron railings and ornate lighting fixtures. The largest of the belvederes will wrap around Buford Tower, creating a major gathering place and overlook, and descend via curving stone steps on either side to a lower promenade along the water. Other stairway connections between the two levels are at the northern bridgeheads of S. First Street and Congress Avenue. These will be more generous in their dimension with broad treads and shallow risers fitted into the hillside; their design and orientation will encourage sitting, lunching and small gatherings.

The Town Lake Promenade, at the lower level, will be a wide pedestrian walkway immediately along the water's edge and just above the lake's high water elevation. Benches along the inside edge, lighting and other furniture designed especially for the Urban Waterfront will furnish the area; a water taxi landing will animate the waterfront and provide transport to other stops. New trees will supplement the existing landscape, providing shade and enframing vistas of Town Lake. Together, the two levels of promenade will accommodate street performers, artists, food vendors, strolling and people-watching, as well as provide "main floor" and "balcony" observation of performances that could be presented on stages floating on Town Lake.



First Street Promenade



Town Lake Promenade

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## **Interstate 35 to The Basin**

### **South Shore**

Public access along the lakeshore is proposed as necessary to continue the exercise trail and strolling paths between I-35 and Pleasant Valley Road. At the west end, connections will be made to the sidewalk on the I-35 bridge deck and to a pedestrian walkway below the bridge along the lake's south shore. The existing hotel at the bridge head is a potential water taxi stop.

A nominal easement/acquisition dimension of fifty feet back from the embankment to the lake is suggested to accommodate the path systems; detailed on-site observations of natural and built features will vary the dimensions along the way. Landscaping will mitigate occasional impacts between public and private uses; access between the two is encouraged whenever feasible.

At the east end, the parkland expands outward from the lake's edge to Lakeshore Drive at Kasuba Beach. The American Youth Hostel Association is currently negotiating to convert the former private swimming facility on this site to a youth hostel. Preliminary observations of the structural condition of the swimming facility, more recently a storage facility for sculls, dictates a thorough structural inspection prior to its adaption to a hostel or any other permanent public use. This area is a probable candidate for a concession facility on the lake.

### **The Basin**

Originally dredged for soil to construct the dike at Longhorn Dam, the Basin forms the broadest area of water surface on Town Lake. Because it is positioned off-stream from the Colorado River channel, it is free from underwater currents occasioned by the release of upstream water from Tom Miller Dam.

Its expansive dimensions and safer hydrologic conditions suggest the Basin's appropriateness for small boat sailing. This will add a dimension of water-based recreation to Town Lake, one of the oft-repeated objectives of the citizens. Accordingly, the Plan proposes to locate a sailing facility, possibly privately operated, at the Basin's southeast corner near the intersection of Lakeshore Drive and Pleasant Valley Road. The shallow water depth in the Basin will require additional dredg-



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ing to realize the potential of this recreational feature. Desirable depth would be dependent upon the type of craft to be used; however, a minimum depth of five feet with a gradual transition to a sandy shoreline would be required for even the smallest sailboats. Additionally, a system of roped buoys should separate the Basin proper from the main river channel and Longhorn Dam. All boating on Town Lake is to be limited by type and activity according to boating statutes currently in force.

Longhorn Shores, between the Basin's east shore and Pleasant Valley Road, will continue to accommodate parking in a reconfigured pattern. Park amenities conducive to picnicking and passive play as well as strolling paths and shade trees will augment the existing exercise trail through the area.

#### North Shore: Festival Beach/Fiesta Gardens

At intervals along the Corridor, Town Lake Park touches established neighborhoods. This relationship is especially strong at Fiesta Gardens and Festival Beach. For block after block, neighborhood houses share a common border with the park. These houses are often within easy earshot of heavily-used park amenities such as picnic pavilions, parking lots and an extremely popular swimming pool. In some cases, the most convenient automobile access to these amenities is through otherwise quiet residential streets. Park planning, development and operational decisions inevitably affect the neighborhood's quality of life. Unfortunately, past experience has shown that even the best intentions to improve the park can increase noise, traffic and security problems to the detriment of nearby residents if all factors are not fully considered.

Recognizing this unique interrelationship, the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan recommends an overriding park policy of thoroughly involving residents and community leaders in the planning and administration process for Fiesta Gardens and Festival Beach. This policy is proposed to acknowledge the park's special obligation to work diligently toward safeguarding its vulnerable neighbors. If used to best advantage, this policy can tap neighborhoods as valuable sources for identifying subtle park use patterns and offering relevant suggestions.

Security, an issue identified by the neighborhood adjoining Festival Beach/Fiesta Gardens, deserves priority attention. Public intoxication, dangerous driving and aggressive, boisterous behavior have become serious concerns to neighborhood residents and the many park users alike.

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Without reliable control of inappropriate behavior, efforts toward physical improvement will likely be rebuffed as being irrelevant to this more pressing concern. The Plan proposes that security be addressed with a commitment to diligent police protection along with a number of strategic physical interventions. In addition, the Plan proposes a long-range policy of coupling the planning, design and construction of park improvements with carefully considered strategies for resolving attendant security implications.

Since most park users arrive by car, improved traffic control is an important ingredient of a safer park and neighborhood environment. The Plan proposes, for example, that the east end of the park drive be disconnected from Chicon Street where park access cuts deeply through the established neighborhood. Instead, it will enter the park at Canadian and continue across the peninsula between the lagoon and Town Lake. This more southerly path will offer a relaxing, scenic drive with broad views of the water and eliminate the conflict between park traffic and activity. This rerouting will also facilitate the eventual removal of the existing parking lot at Chicon and Bergman, a source of neighborhood irritation. A desirable site for the eventual relocation of displaced houses from elsewhere in the city, it should be secured and lighted in the interim.

Similarly, the cul-de-sacs Chalmers and Saldana, often used as parking areas for nearby picnic pavilions and playscape equipment, are proposed to be removed and the two roads joined together. To discourage its use as a route to the park amenities, the path of the connecting road should lie as far to the north as possible, and a fence should be erected to limit park access to pedestrians. A policy limiting parking on the streets should be established with the help of the nearby residents and future amenities should be oriented toward the main park road to further discourage access through the neighborhood.

Lighting is another security issue identified by the neighborhood to discourage loud nighttime gatherings that occasionally erupt into aggressive behavior. The Plan endorses the neighborhood's recommendation for lighting parking lots and other activity zones. Coupled with a well-enforced curfew, lighting will help discourage inappropriate behavior in the park.

The neighborhood has been a valuable source of planning for Festival Beach and Fiesta Gardens for more than a few years. Many of the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the area are drawn from this neighborhood planning process and the East Town Lake Com-

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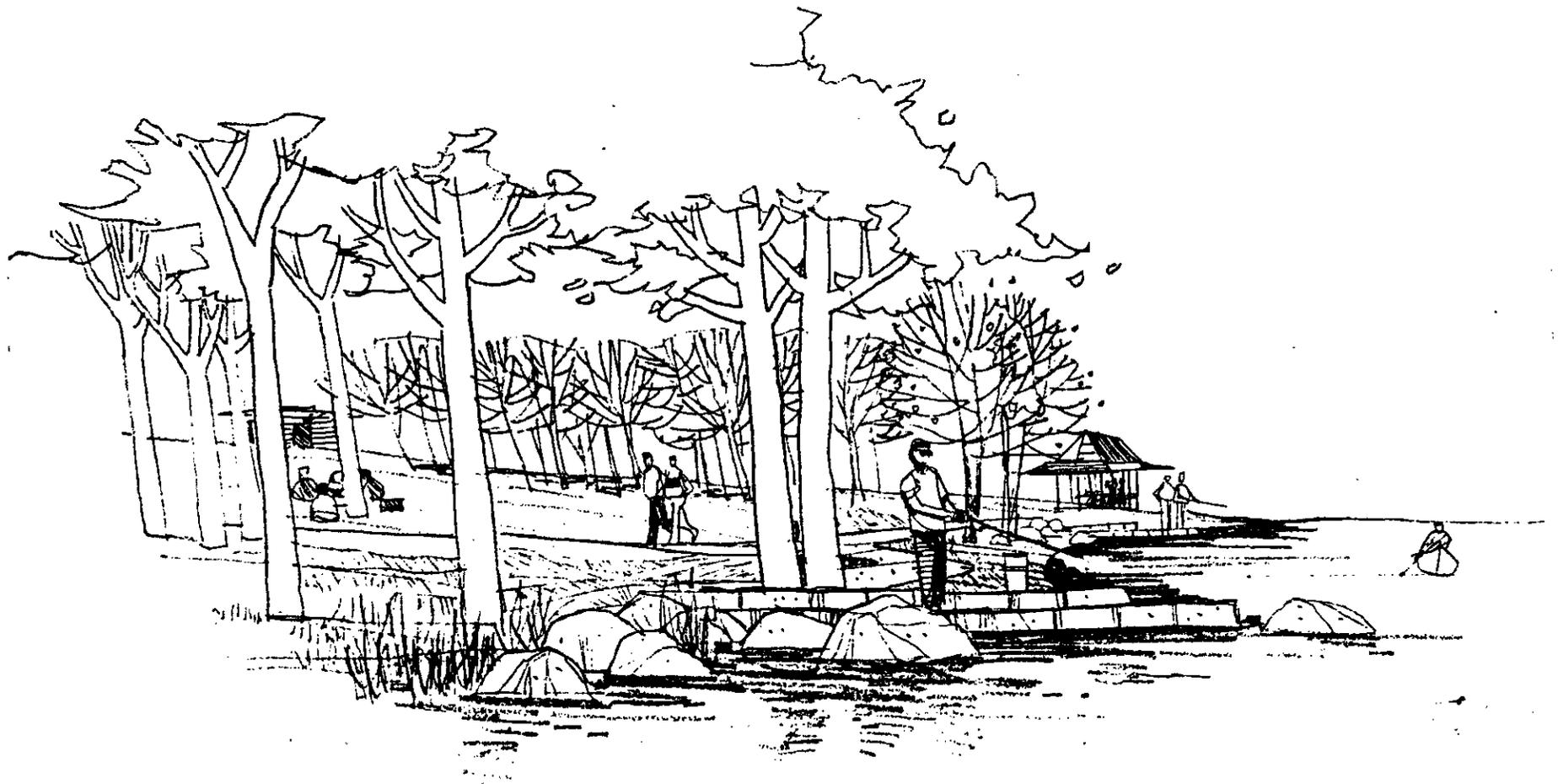
munity/Fiesta Gardens Area Neighborhood Plan of 1984. Accordingly, the Plan designates the Fiesta Gardens complex as a Neighborhood Park facility where neighborhood activities such as industrial arts programs, seniors programs, or children's arts programs can be accommodated. The entry to the complex will be relocated to the east toward Canadian Street. As expansion needs warrant, Fiesta Gardens will be extended along the east end of the lagoon in a scale and character compatible with the neighborhood.

Changes proposed to be made around the lagoon include dismantling the bleachers to make way for outdoor eating areas, picturesque planting and easier access to the lagoon. A grassy slope on the lagoon's west bank will be adapted to an outdoor amphitheater for cultural events and performances to take place with the lagoon as a backdrop.

Fishing, a popular recreational activity in this part of the park, is often hampered by dense water grasses at the shoreline. Accordingly, a fishing pier will be added on the lagoon. To improve the water quality in the lagoon generally, a new channel will be cut on the upstream side and the existing channel downstream will be realigned. Together with some dredging and shoreline modification, the configuration will enhance water circulation, eliminate stagnation and make the lagoon suitable for fishing, recreational boating and other water-related activities.

To completely affect the transition to a Neighborhood Park complex, the chainlink fence securing the grounds will be removed or modified to permit increased neighborhood accessibility consistent with security. Currently a source of neighborhood irritation, the existing fence protects facilities from vandalism. An attractive fence enclosing the most sensitive portions of the building complex designed so that generous gates are kept open most times will provide necessary security after curfew and for special occasions, but leave the area open to the neighborhood most of the time.

Anchored on the east by the building complex on the lagoon and extending west to include the Martin Pool and the Fire Marshall's office, the Neighborhood Park will be the site of a host of special amenities specific to the community. An enlarged Martin Pool with an added wading pool, expanded playscape equipment and additional picnic pavilions, barbecue facilities and public restrooms will enhance this area. The Fire Marshal's building is proposed to eventually be converted to a community center.



Shoreline character: Festival Beach

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While the Fiesta Gardens Neighborhood Park will be the area of most concentrated activity, the entire area from the Metz peninsula to I-35 will be developed for pastoral park enjoyment. Clusters of park benches, drinking fountains, and picnic tables will be available along meandering paths. Public restrooms, a much-needed addition, will be available in sufficient number to encourage all-day park visits without interruption. Abundant tree plantings will ensure a pattern of dense shade to complement the hot open spaces.

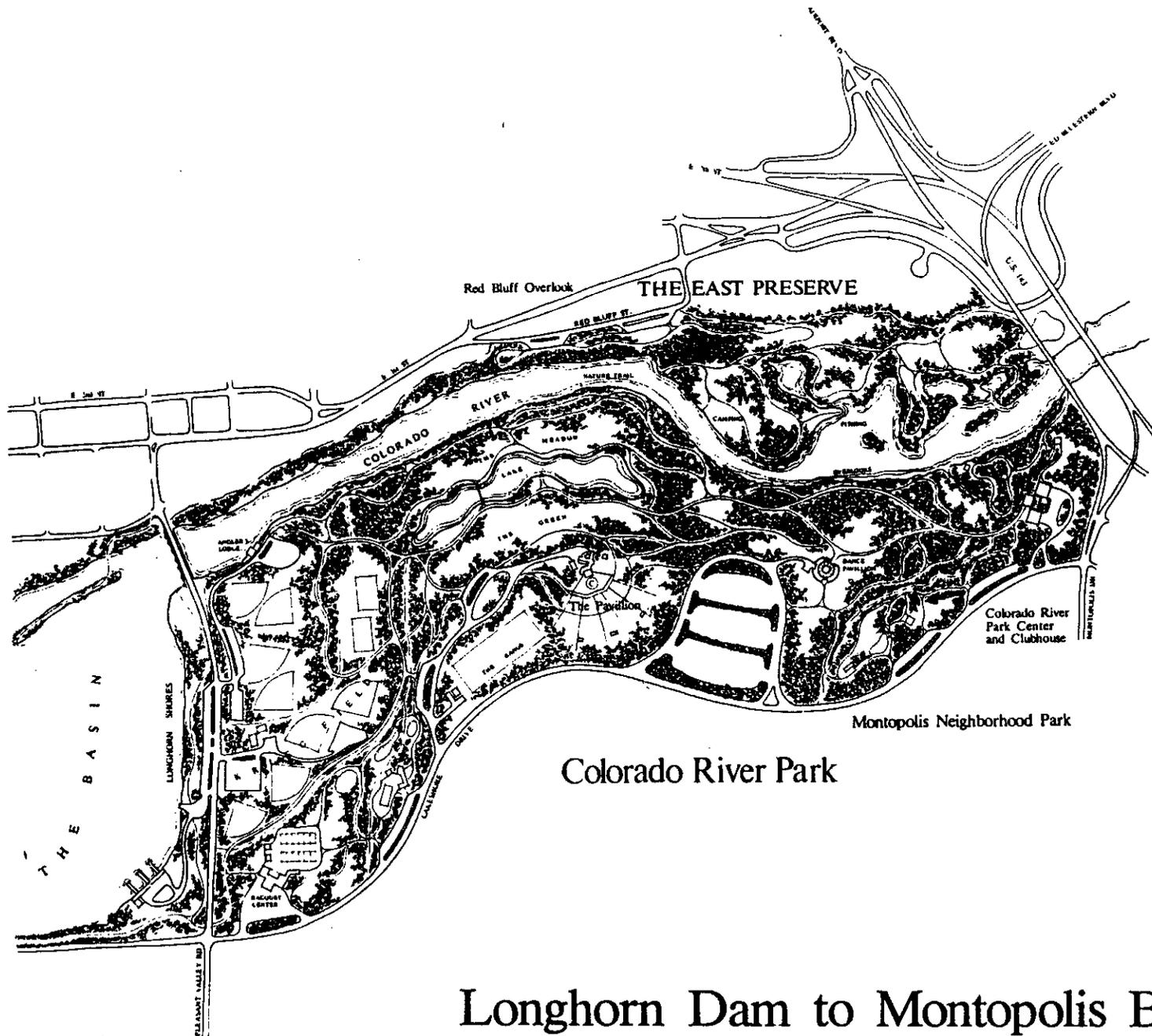
The exercise trail will be rerouted to the lake side of the power plant via a curving steel bridge over the water to link Festival Beach and Fiesta Gardens to the Metz peninsula and the rest of the trail loop from MOPAC to the Longhorn Dam.

The shoreline itself will be a place for strolling, fishing or informal gathering and, in some places, scenic driving. Free of buildings and other high activity that might otherwise interrupt its pastoral character, it will occasionally be punctuated by fishing outcrops. When seen from the south shore or from I-35, the shoreline will appear green and natural, reinforcing the beauty of the lake itself.

### **Longhorn Dam to Montopolis Bridge**

#### **Colorado River Park/Krieg Field**

The largest single effort in terms of land acquisition and capital investments for improvements proposed in the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan is the development of the Colorado River Park at the east end of the Corridor. The area along the south shore of the free-flowing Colorado River between Longhorn Dam and Montopolis Bridge is unique in the Corridor in several ways. As the only stretch of the river that remains a natural waterway, its banks, floodplains, vegetation and wildlife exhibit a more native character than the upstream, dammed portion of the river. This area is also relatively less developed than other portions of the Corridor. Major roads have never been cut to facilitate development east of Pleasant Valley Road and north of Riverside Drive. Land in the area currently dedicated as parkland includes Krieg Field and undeveloped or underutilized acreage such as the existing Colorado River Park (31 acres on the south shore immediately west of Montopolis bridge) and the south bank of the Colorado River between it and Krieg Field.



Longhorn Dam to Montopolis Bridge

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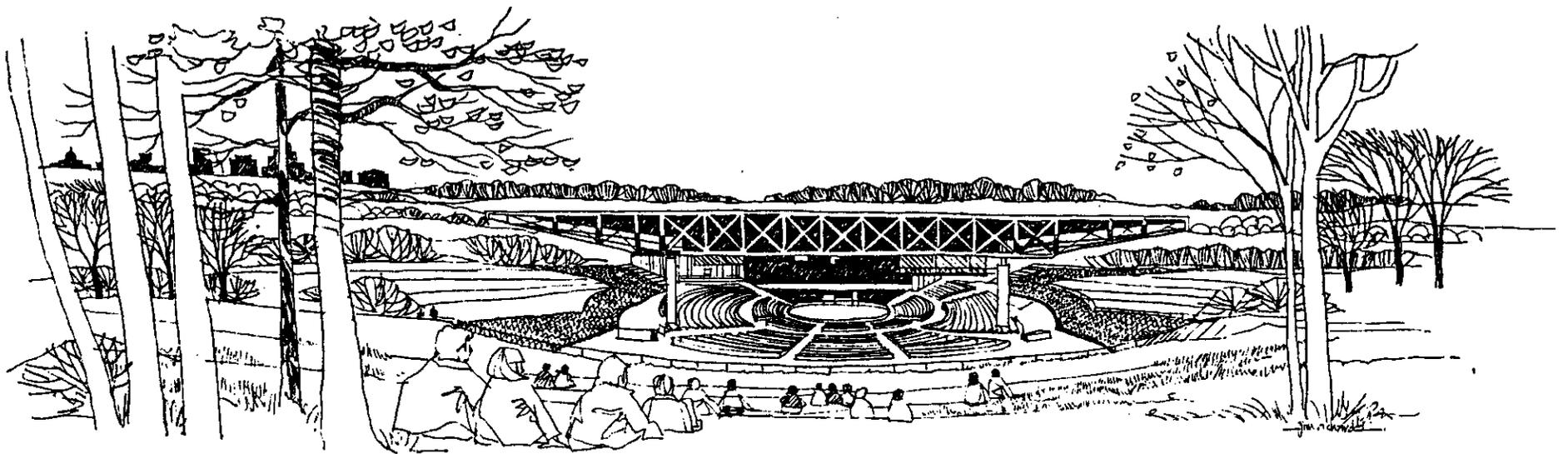
This proposal for a new Colorado River Park expands existing city property through the acquisition of significant new holdings to create a major metropolitan park at the east end of the Corridor that will be comparable in scale and its scope of activities to Zilker Park. Just as Zilker Park has been available to grow with Austin and meet its expanding cultural and recreational needs over the last fifty years, so the Colorado River Park will be available to meet such needs for the next fifty years of the city's future. Like its western counterpart, Colorado River Park will incorporate a broad range of park types, from Preserve to Cultural Park, and accommodate a wide range of activities from nature trails and paths to large gatherings for performances.

The extension of Lakeshore Drive between Pleasant Valley Road and Montopolis Drive is critical to the development of the Colorado River Park. Once this road is established as a major east/west route, the park will have excellent access from I-35 on the west and US 183 on the east.

Such accessibility will be particularly important to the success of the Performance Pavilion, proposed to accommodate city-wide indoor/outdoor theater and musical events. Modeled after similar successful facilities such as Wolf Trap outside Washington, D.C., the pavilion will contain 4,500 - 6,000 seats under shelter and 7,000 - 10,000 seats on an amphitheater lawn. The position of the pavilion in the park is based on locating optimum slopes for amphitheater seating and on finding a location where the audience can look beyond the performance stage to dramatic views of the downtown skyline available from Colorado River Park. Although sheltered seating areas and the stage area will need to be secured at other than performance times, the amphitheater lawn, restrooms, and concession kiosks can be used for informal, everyday park use as well as for performance use.

Two kinds of parking will be provided for the Performance Pavilion. Permanent paved parking areas for 1400 - 1600 cars will accommodate about the same crowd as the covered portion of the Performance Pavilion. These parking areas will be centrally located in the park so as to serve as fully as possible the general parking needs of Colorado River Park as well as performance parking. They are configured to penetrate deep into the park toward the scenic meadows and trails in the floodplain area beside the river below.

To meet the needs of the largest performances in the pavilion, approximately 2000 temporary overflow parking spaces will be arranged on a large, open field. When it is not required for parking, the field will be occupied by a golf driving range. Particularly well-suited to this shared use



Site character: Performance pavilion in Colorado River Park

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because soil compaction or rutting are not as serious as they would be to playing fields, the driving range will also provide a source of revenue.

All existing baseball diamonds at Krieg Field will remain in their current configuration. Extensive landscaping will be initiated to transform the visual character of the site to a gentler, more parklike environment. Trees will shroud light poles, backstops, fences and bleachers and give welcome shade and a cooler ambient temperature for the comfort of both players and spectators.

New facilities to be added near Krieg Field include an Angler's Lodge near Longhorn Dam where fishermen already gather. This will be a modest facility with a small meeting room, supplies shop, and restrooms for use by various organizations but especially dedicated to anglers. Information about fishing in the river and Town Lake will be posted here.

South of Krieg Field on the extended Lakeshore Drive, a Health and Fitness Center will serve a purpose similar to the YMCA at the west end of Town Lake and, perhaps, be similarly managed independent of the City. Programming of the facility is more detailed than the scope of this study allows, but might include tennis courts, basketball courts, racquetball and squash courts, weight and exercise rooms, and a swimming pool.

A large area of the Colorado River Park occupying the high, heavily-vegetated bluff in the southeast portion of the park will be dedicated to general recreational needs. Blessed with many large, beautiful trees and spectacular views to the northwest toward downtown, the area is ideally suited for informal park gatherings like picnicking and church and family gatherings. The area will be generously populated with barbecue pits, tables, benches, picnic pavilions, a playscape and games areas for activities such as basketball, volleyball and frisbee.

Several special facilities have been requested by citizen groups for this area. At the west end of the bluff, where the views are particularly dramatic, an open-air dancing facility is planned for festivals and other special occasions. Large events may use the adjacent Performance Pavilion as well, and parking will be convenient for sizable crowds. At least one meeting/recreational facility will be located in this part of Colorado River Park.



Park drive character: Colorado River Park

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A portion of Colorado River Park adjacent to the Montopolis neighborhood will be designated a Neighborhood Park. Partially separated from the larger park by existing creeks and topographical change, this more modest-sized area will have facilities programmed and scaled more to the needs of the immediate community than to the city at large. In this way, it will parallel other portions of Town Lake Park dedicated for use by the East Austin, West Austin, Travis Heights, and Barton Hills neighborhoods where they abut the park.

#### The East Preserve

The entire lowlands area and bluffs on the north side of the Colorado River east of Longhorn Dam to the Montopolis Bridge is designated as a Preserve in the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan. The East Preserve will match the similar conservation of wild areas occurring at the west end of the Corridor upstream from MOPAC to Red Bud Isle.

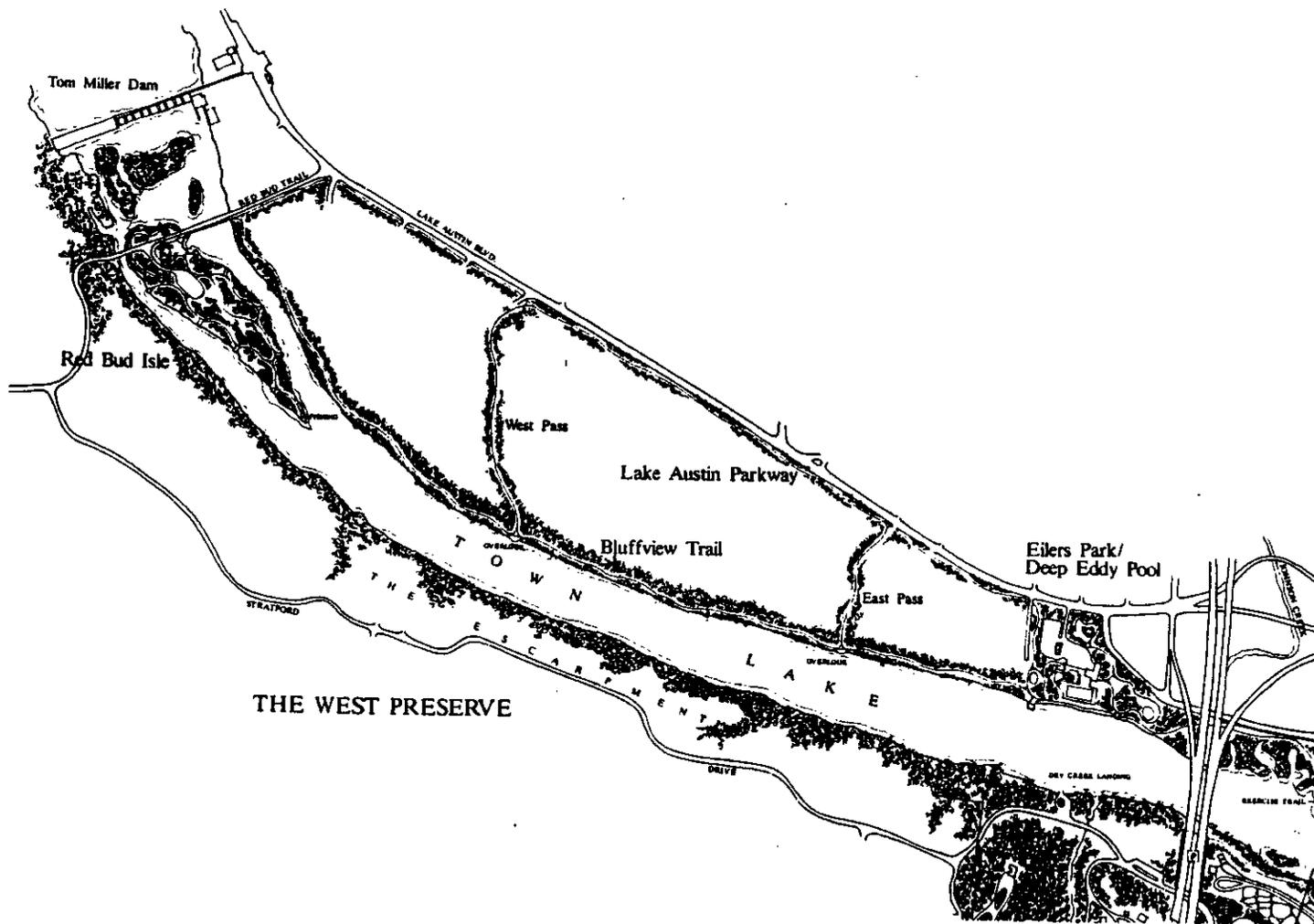
Much of the land in the East Preserve was recently donated to the City and is in the river's floodplain. The land is cut irregularly by rivulets and has been extensively excavated. Although far from being in a native state, the area's lack of development gives it a scenic and even dramatic character. Exceptional vistas of the entire river valley are experienced from the bluffs that form its north edge.

Access to the East Preserve will be limited to nature trails and fishermen's paths from parking areas under Montopolis Bridge and from an overlook park on the south side of Red Bluff Trail. Wildlife and water fowl will be nurtured in the preserve and native river-bottom vegetation typical to central Texas will be interpreted. Man-made scars will be healed so as to restore a wild and natural feeling to the area. The beauty of the free-flowing Colorado River will be the primary asset of this extension of the Colorado River Park.

#### Tom Miller Dam to Mopac

#### Eilers Park/Deep Eddy

Presently well-concealed behind commercial uses fronting on Lake Austin Boulevard, Eilers Park and Deep Eddy deserve improved access and visibility. Accordingly, the Plan proposes



Tom Miller Dam to MOPAC

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that the commercial properties be acquired as they become available and the park expanded accordingly. Additional expansion will replace the adjacent City maintenance yard. The expanded area will allow for needed additional parking and concession activity to supplement the existing swimming, recreation and play facilities. A water taxi stop will give additional access from the lake side.

#### The West Preserve

The steepness of the south shore bluffs and the occasional flood inundations of Red Bud Isle have protected the rugged, untamed qualities of the natural landscape in the westernmost reach of Town Lake between Tom Miller Dam and the MOPAC bridge. The sense of wilderness that prevails here has been greatly abetted by minimal development of the University of Texas' Brackenridge Tract along the north shore. The quiet outdoor biological research activity occupying the large central section of the property adds to the area's emphasis on nature.

Red Bud Isle will remain predominantly natural in character to serve the community's expressed desires for a sense of wild landscape in these unspoiled areas. With uses limited to fishing and picnicking, overcrowding of its resources will be controlled by limiting parking to small, pervious stalls along the island's central ridgeline. No conveniences or furnishings are planned. Ultimately, an aerial bridge across the lake is recommended to replace the existing low-water crossing and further isolate Red Bud Isle as a wilderness area.

Similarly, the bluffs along the lake's south shore are to be preserved in their natural condition with *no access accommodation provided*.

Preservation of the north shore, and to a large degree the entire reach, will be dependent upon the future of the Brackenridge Tract. Continuation of the University's research and low-rise residential uses will serve the environmental quality of the zone best. In any event, public access along the lake shore on land in the floodplain will provide for pedestrian access to Red Bud Isle from Eilers Park. In keeping with the natural setting and respectful of the biological research needs, circulation will be limited to a nature trail, elevated above the ground as necessary to avoid damage to the environment or interruptions of research. Occasional overlooks will frame views of the lake and the wooded bluffs rising dramatically from its south shore. The overlooks also serve to punctuate



Boardwalk in the West Preserve

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the nature trail's intersection with two other potential paths following natural drainage ways down the slope from Lake Austin Boulevard.

A greenway setback proposed along the south side of Lakeshore Boulevard will accommodate a trail for hikers and bicyclists and provide a landscape foreground for abutting uses.

### **Circulation**

Currently, Town Lake enjoys only one system of circulation. Even though it is not as yet complete, Town Lake's Hike and Bike Trail is an extremely popular and attractive facility, a model coveted by other communities. Roadways might be mentioned as a second existing system since automobile access is provided to most areas of the park; however, because access to the park is generally a secondary function of the existing public streets and roads, they cannot be said to compose a park road system. In general, visual and physical access to parkland is inadequate and trafficways impact parkland adversely (e.g. Barton Springs Road in Zilker Park) more frequently than they contribute to its enhancement.

The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan proposes an hierarchal circulation system composed of six modes: vehicular, public tram, exercise trails, bikeways, strolling paths and water taxi. While some may overlap or coincide on occasion, (most notably, all systems will occasionally share space with bicycles), each is conceived as an integral system.

#### **Vehicular circulation**

Modifications to the existing street pattern, combined with some park expansion, will provide greater opportunity to experience Town Lake Park from the car in a "ride around the park". Beginning at Congress Avenue and First Street, the route proceeds eastward on the proposed First Street Promenade to a right turn onto Red River Street, which is proposed to be modified in alignment to flow into lower Rainey Street and Waterfront Street. After passing below I-35, an intersection reconfiguration will favor easy movement into the park road through Festival Beach. To eliminate park traffic impact on Bergman Street, the park road will bend around the south side of the lagoon at Fiesta Gardens and continue via Canadian Street to the East First and East Second couplet.

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A turnoff onto Red Bluff Street from East First Street will provide dramatic vistas of the Colorado River Park.

After crossing over Montopolis Bridge, the park route will continue on the proposed extension of Lakeshore Boulevard with visual and physical access to the park along its entire length to Pleasant Valley Road and beyond to Kasuba Beach. The route will continue on Riverside Drive past the Norwood Gardens and Twin Creeks Park to Barton Springs Road. From Barton Springs Road, a roadway loop into Auditorium Shores and around to Lamar Boulevard will provide access to museum sites. From South Lamar Boulevard to MOPAC, existing or proposed parkland consumes both sides of Barton Springs Road, from the foot of the bluffs south of the road northward to Town Lake. Another drive loop through the southern half of Zilker Park gives access to picnic areas and to Barton Springs Pool. Other existing roads have been removed from Auditorium Shores and Zilker Park to enhance park quality and eliminate pedestrian conflict.

Stratford Drive, Red Bud Trail and Lake Austin Boulevard continue the park route to MOPAC where the Plan proposes to disengage West First Street from MOPAC in favor of an alternative access route to downtown. This will allow the park route to continue on West First Street through the Lamar Beach area and along the First Street Promenade to Congress Avenue.

#### Parking

Parking in Town Lake Park is proposed to be more concentrated than in the past and shared wherever possible with other, non-park users. The park's proximity to office and retail centers that predominantly utilize daytime/workday parking facilities affords the opportunity to extend that usage into evening and weekend hours for park visitors. Opportunities that arise to avoid or minimize the use of parkland for parking through off-site or structured parking facilities should be captured. Small lots for handicapped, short-term convenience and off-hour parking will, of course, be provided at each destination point in the park.

In general, the Preserve areas will be provided with only limited surface parking lots positioned near their entrances so as to minimize their impact on the environment. Where appropriate, the surface will be pervious to prevent storm water runoff and environmental degradation.

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Parking will also be limited to small surface lots at Neighborhood Parks. Pedestrian access to these will be emphasized through enhancement of walks and trails.

The Urban Waterfront will depend entirely upon off-site parking provided by nearby public and private facilities.

Community Parks will be furnished with parking lots at individual destinations within them. The exception to this is Zilker Park which, together with the Pecan Gardens and the Cultural Park at Auditorium Shores, will depend largely on parking structures served by the park tram system to distribute visitors throughout these areas. Structures below the MOPAC bridge on the west end and Palmer Auditorium at the east end are favorably sited for downtown park-and-ride transit use. The latter structure will encircle all but the lakefront side of the auditorium and will feature stepped terraces draped with vinery so as to blend into the green landscape of the Cultural Park. Two other parking structures flanking the Pecan Gardens are to be joint public/private facilities to serve private development as well as park users in the area.

#### Tramway

A transport system will distribute visitors to destinations in Zilker Park, Pecan Gardens and Auditorium Shores from the parking structures at the east and west ends of the zone. To travel along its own surfaced right-of-way, the system will employ powered tractor units followed by one or two unpowered trailers. To be recreational in appearance, the vehicles will be open sided with passengers entering along the entire side directly into each row of bench seats. Route configurations will serve all attractions in the Corridor between Palmer Auditorium and Austin Nature Center.

#### Exercise Trail

As popular as the existing Town Lake Hike and Bike Trail is, overcrowding caused by its multiple use by joggers, bicyclists and strollers produces confusion, conflict and occasional danger. Accordingly, the Plan proposes to separate these different users wherever feasible. Removing the bicyclists and strollers from the Hike and Bike Trail will free it for its primary intended purpose, exercise walking and jogging. Distance markers, rest stops, drinking fountains and showers will furnish the trail.

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## Bikeways

The speed at which bicycles frequently travel in the park suggests that they be allocated accommodations separate from pedestrianways. Within Zilker Park, Pecan Gardens and Auditorium Shores, the tramway will double as bikeway. Its paved surface and greater width will assure greater safety and comfort.

Elsewhere throughout Town Lake Park, bicyclists will share rights-of-way with automobiles, joggers and walkers as required by site-specific circumstances. Bikeways will be outfitted with parking racks at popular destinations and rest stops.

## Strolling Paths

The most pervasive circulation system to be developed throughout Town Lake Park, strolling paths will lead visitors from point to point along a relaxed, meandering course that touches nature more fully than the other systems and presents a variety of vistas. Moving along the edges of open fields, through shady woods and abundantly furnished with benches, shelters, drinking fountains and amenities, the strolling paths will provide an entirely new and enjoyable dimension to experiencing Town Lake Park.

## Water Taxi

As the activities and destination facilities proposed within and along Town Lake Park are more fully realized, the variety of the attractions will generate a desire for alternative access between them. The experience of travelling from one feature to another by boat rather than by car will become an attraction in its own right.

While a water taxi system is flexible and can be readily adapted to changing conditions over time, stops are envisioned at destinations such as Town Lake Promenade, Auditorium Shores, Pecan Gardens, Zilker Park and Fiesta Gardens.

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## **IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**

The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan presents a vision of the outstanding recreational and aesthetic opportunities that exist within the central corridor of Austin. Because it is comprehensive, the scope of these recommendations is broad and wide-ranging. Because it is visionary, it looks beyond present day constraints and sets a course for the future. Its ultimate realization will be dependent upon the actions and commitments of more than one generation of Austinites.

Yet, if the opportunities for improved civic beauty and increased quality of life delineated in the Plan are to be available to the next generation of Austin's citizens, initial steps, such as acquisition or control of available key sites, will need to be taken immediately. The dynamic nature of the city and of the Town Lake Corridor could produce change that could otherwise preclude the Plan's eventual implementation.

Investment in the Plan's implementation should represent Town Lake Park's significance to Austin as a community of citizens and to the individual businesses, institutions, organizations and people who enjoy its benefits. Multiple sources of funding are necessary. The Plan, which seeks to minimize public costs, generate revenues, attract private investment and encourage contributions, includes several significant public/private joint venture opportunities.

Accordingly, the implementation program for Town Lake Park has been structured so that responsibilities can be shared by the City of Austin and the private sector over a long period of time. As with any complex publicly or privately-based development program, it includes a combination of financing tools and incentives with proper vehicles to manage them, an appropriate organizational approach, and an imaginative physical master plan which can be carried out incrementally. Although some elements should be addressed by the City and private leaders in the immediate future, other activities may be inappropriate or infeasible until some later time, perhaps as distant as 15 to 30 years. A central theme is that a special organizational structure must be set up and maintained to provide credibility and follow-through for the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan over the long term.

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## Organizational Structure

A new, non-profit charitable organization should be established to complement Austin's Parks and Recreation Department. Through the organization's governing board, the City and its Parks and Recreation Department will have a "partner vehicle" to provide funding, receive contributions, and manage (or negotiate for management) several key elements of the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan's implementation program over the next three decades.

*The concept of establishing quasi-public organizations to supplement the activities of local government is well established in the United States. The federal government has determined that the range of services provided by tax-exempt or charitable organizations is sufficiently significant to warrant exclusion from tax liability under the Internal Revenue Code. Of seven categories of exempt-purpose organizations allowed under Section 501(c)(3) of the Tax Code, research suggests that the "Charitable Organization" designation is the most appropriate for a new umbrella organization for the Town Lake Park implementation program. A charitable group is defined as one that erects or maintains public buildings, monuments, or works and which lessen the burden of government. More specifically, the program could be organized under the regulations affecting a category of charitable organizations called "Municipal Improvements Corporations", defined as non-profit corporations proposed to be formed to effect certain improvements to municipally-owned property. As described by the Federal Tax Code, the corporation would be non-taxable where: "all of the capital stock of the corporation is issued to the City in exchange for a lease on the property, the lease to provide that at the end of its term or as soon as the indebtedness of the corporation is retired by it, or when the City assumes or discharges the outstanding debt of the corporation, whichever occurs first, the City would become absolute owner of the improvements. Funds necessary to make the improvements would be borrowed on debenture notes by the corporation, secured by a pledge of the net revenues from rentals of the approved property, and the debt would be liquidated from the proceeds of operations over a period approximately the length of the lease."*

Establishment of a Municipal Improvements Corporation for the implementation of Town Lake Park will provide a number of advantages. First, the corporation could engage in joint venture efforts, partnerships and lease arrangements with outside parties, all governed by a legally mandated Board of Directors. Since the City of Austin would hold all of the capital stock of the corporation and would eventually own outright all of the improvements made by the corporation on municipally-owned property, the City would stand to benefit by the existence and performance of the corpora-

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tion. Second, the non-profit charitable status of the Town Lake Municipal Improvements Corporation would provide credibility for the organization, since its purpose is to carry out the Town Lake Plan without acting as a private business venture. Third, the organization could, through its capacity to generate and receive revenues dedicated to implementation of the Park's plan, take on specific projects in the Town Lake Corridor contingent on the ability of the City's Parks and Recreation Department to partially or wholly underwrite those projects. Finally, because the nature and sources of potential funds for carrying out the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan fall largely outside existing financial mechanisms in the Parks and Recreation Department budget, the Municipal Improvements Corporation could serve as the City's charitable "umbrella organization" to receive and administer funding from these diverse sources.

The Town Lake Municipal Improvements Corporation must have a clearly stated charitable purpose and must be incorporated as a non-profit organization under the Texas Non-profit Corporation Act. It is critical that, at the time of incorporation, its charitable purpose be defined as creating a broad range of recreational opportunities for the residents of Austin. Further, it should be stated that the proposed improvements, such as the Pecan Gardens and Performance Pavilion, would be highly improbable without a strong degree of City and charitable organizational ownership necessary to make the projects workable.

The Corporation must have a Board of Directors of at least 15 members for legal incorporation. Terms of Board membership should be staggered so that reappointments occur on a schedule separate from municipal elections and City budgeting periods. Staggered terms will provide an inherent consistency of operating procedure and policy that will be vital in carrying out the Town Lake Park implementation program over a long period of time. Members should be selected for their insight as to the value of Town Lake for the entire city of Austin and should represent specific areas of expertise, experience, and enthusiasm for Town Lake's Comprehensive Plan. Because the private sector fundraising component will represent a substantial portion of financing available for elements of the Plan, it is critical that a strong relationship be established with Austin's corporate leadership and local, regional and national charitable foundations and private benefactors. Board representation should include a cross-section of Austin's local, state and national leaders. The Board must also include broad contact and implementational liaison with neighborhood groups whose areas of concern are affected by future improvements proposed in the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan. Through the personal stature of Board members, the Town Lake Municipal Improvements Corporation will be established as a "blue ribbon" organization, dedicated to the enhancement and improvement of the

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Town Lake Corridor. Because the Municipal Improvements Corporation must be seen by the public as an independent group, its Board must be viewed as strictly bi-partisan and non-political. To succeed, the Corporation must establish itself as a strong force in the Austin area. This will be accomplished through the status and credibility of its Board members and by initiating achievable activities in the early years of its operation.

Because the tax laws governing this type of organization were radically changed in 1986 and technical corrections for the Tax Reform Act of 1986 are currently being written, it is critical that the concept of establishing a Municipal Improvements Corporation receive thorough legal review to assure its appropriateness and refine its specific application.

### **Funding Program**

Through the Municipal Improvement Corporation's organizational structure, and because the City of Austin will own all of the stock in the charitable organization, a strong partnership opportunity will exist between the two to encourage investment, job creation and special project funding to implement the Town Lake Plan. Because the Plan is comprehensive and its implementation staged over a 25 to 30 year time period, flexibility of funding programs will be necessary to respond to economic cycles, changes in the Austin development community, and the inevitable expansion of the city's population. As Austin grows, Town Lake Park will become more precious and valuable to the entire community.

Tax-exempt status combined with flexibility and long-term policy stability in carrying out the vision of the Plan will make the Municipal Improvements Corporation the logical "partnership vehicle" to work with the City of Austin in seeing that the Plan's goals are met. As a charitable organization benefiting the city, it will be legally empowered to implement funding actions in each of four recommended categories for the Town Lake program: public bonds, public funding sources, private sector fund raising, and public/private partnerships, each of which is described with specific applications in the paragraphs that follow. The funding programs are diverse in their scale and appropriateness, logical uses, and processes necessary to carry them out. Opportunities for application of the funding sources will change over time. At certain points, it may be prudent to emphasize one or more while de-emphasizing others. If economic conditions and public support warrant, it may also be possible to utilize all four funding sources simultaneously.

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## Public Bonds

**Tax Exempt Bonds:** As a 501(c)(3) charitable organization with bonding capacity, the Municipal Improvements Corporation will be exempt from the allocation cap based on population on the amount of public bonds that the State of Texas can offer. Because the Corporation will serve a public benefit, the "ultimate use" of its bonds should allow them to be tax-exempt, despite the fact that in some private operators may manage for-profit enterprises in Corporation-owned facilities.

The tax exempt bonds should most logically be used to construct facilities on City-owned land to be leased and operated by others. The Internal Revenue Service requires that uses in the buildings reinforce the nonprofit purpose of the project. The bonds are recommended to be used to build restaurants and other attractions at the Pecan Gardens and the Performance Pavilion and its ancillary structures, with the revenues produced by these facilities applied to the bond payment obligations. This financing structure offers the advantage that private operators could pay lower rents over a long term and not have the financial burden of a conventionally-financed restaurant or entertainment facility to carry against their revenues. The overriding "public benefit" that justifies issuance of tax-exempt bonds is the improvement in recreational offering available in Town Lake Park.

**General Obligation Bonds:** Backed by the full faith and credit of the issuing city, GO bonds have been used by city governments for a variety of capital improvements such as roads and pedestrian ways, sewer and water projects, and other municipal facilities. Although Austin's bond rating has followed the recent downward economic cycle of the region, it is certain to improve to an extent that additional General Obligation Bonds can be floated for local capital improvements.

To the extent possible, GO bonds should provide those services and utilities that will not directly generate revenues in the same way that facilities funded by tax exempt bonds will. Roadways, parking facilities, pedestrian paths, renovation of existing park facilities and development of additional recreational opportunities in the Town Lake Corridor are all logical uses for GO bond expenditures. Utilities and below-ground improvements which will be necessary for development of revenue-producing facilities should also be funded by GO bonds to the extent possible in order to reduce the tax-exempt bond obligation and resulting rent rates for licensed operators in leasing those facilities.

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## Public Funding Sources

Acquisition of key sites is the most important initial use for public funding since land ownership by the City will trigger opportunities for the Municipal Improvement Corporation to begin its work. Unless the land is City-owned, the funding capacity of the Corporation cannot be used. If the Pecan Gardens and Performance Pavilion are to be carried out by the Municipal Improvement Corporation, their designated sites must first be acquired by the City. And, once developed, recreational facilities and areas must be maintained to a high standard to both protect the initial investment and continue to attract users. Because private sources are less prone to fund on-going maintenance and operations costs than specific project development, a higher priority should be given to obtaining public sector funding for these maintenance and operations expenditures.

A number of public funding sources exist that may potentially aid in the implementation of Town Lake Park. All of these sources should be explored and as many as possible incorporated into the implementation program.

**City of Austin Departmental Funds:** To the extent that broad-based citizen support for Town Lake Park becomes apparent, City Council could translate such support into increased Parks and Recreation Department budget allocations to implement the Plan. Other departments, such as Public Works, should assist in the Corridor's development by undertaking specific plan objectives such as street revisions and additions. Because several of the facilities proposed for the Corridor, such as the Pecan Gardens and Cultural Park, will serve to enhance the city's tourist and visitor potential, funding from the new organization responsible for visitor and convention business in the city should also be included.

As the "crown jewel" in Austin's park system, Town Lake is a symbol of the quality of life that attracts residents, business, and industry to the city. Accordingly, it could be designated by the City as a "receiving zone" for development fees for projects located elsewhere in the community. This concept of linkage, in which fees for development in one location are used to benefit another area, has frequently been used for the creation of low and moderate income housing and other public facilities. While the addition of another development fee must be carefully weighed against what are already considered to be unusually stringent development regulations and extractions, the decla-

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ration of Town Lake as a receiving zone for business and industrial location fees could offer a potential long-term funding source for the City.

**Capital Metro:** The transit authority can meet the needs of commuters and advance the implementation of the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan by undertaking the construction of the parking structures at Palmer Auditorium and under MOPAC. Shuttle service from these park-and-ride facilities will ease congestion in the central city. After serving commuter needs during the weekday, the parking structures will offer convenient access to park attractions in the evening and on weekends.

**Lower Colorado River Authority:** Since Town Lake is a link in the larger Colorado River system controlled by the LCRA, their participation in funding improvements such as water quality improvement and, potentially, recreational enhancement should be invited.

**The University of Texas:** UT-Austin represents one of the largest single land owners along Town Lake. Any opportunities for joint-venture or shared-cost programs which will benefit both the University and the city as a whole should be explored. The wildlife sanctuary aspects of the Preserve area on the upper reaches of Town Lake, public access along the lakeshore, and scenic easements are opportunities for cooperative discussion between the City and the University.

**State Government:** As the State's Capital City, Austin should pursue the possibility of special legislatively appropriated State funds for development of Town Lake facilities as an extension of the city's already established attractions for visiting school groups, clubs and associations and other constituent groups from across Texas. Current economic conditions in the state, combined with unprecedented budget deficits caused by the region's economic downturn, suggest that this approach may be more timely at a later date. But as Texas' prosperity returns and state revenues increase, Town Lake should be viewed as a statewide amenity that beautifies and enhances the State's Capital.

**Federal Programs:** Federal funds available to cities for recreational development programs have been reduced from previous levels. Nevertheless, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR), the U.S. Department of Interior, the Army Corps of Engineers and the National Endowment for the Arts, through its Design Arts Program, all conduct studies, engineering analyses and, in some cases, capital improvements programs which might be incorporated into Town Lake Park's implementa-

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tion as additional funding sources. An early task of the Municipal Improvement Corporation should be to survey the funding programs of these and other Federal agencies to determine which are specifically appropriate and available for Town Lake Park.

**Community Associations:** While Austin's community associations will not represent a large dollar share of the potential funding for the Town Lake implementation program, their participation is important. The commitment of funds by neighborhood associations and other charitable groups for particular items or projects in the Corridor will increase the sense of pride, ownership and demonstrate "public" support for the implementation plan. At this scale of potential funding contribution, a "buy-a-bench" program or landscape contribution designated for a particular location could serve as a model, much like the already established Memorial Planting program along Town Lake and special exhibits of the Zilker Botanical Garden. The willingness and enthusiasm with which neighborhood associations have participated in the Town Lake master planning process is an indication of their commitment and interest. They should be offered opportunities to sponsor specific projects adjacent to their neighborhoods and be recognized for their contributions. Issuance of an annual "wish list" of needed public amenities available for sponsorship by individuals and groups has proven to be particularly useful as a focal point in organizational annual membership and funding campaigns.

#### **Private Sector Fund Raising**

Funds from private sources will be critical to the implementation of the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan. Highly visible projects such as illuminating the bridges over Town Lake, constructing park structures and providing park furniture will be attractive to private giving. A fund within the Town Lake Municipal Improvements Corporation should be established to receive private contributions, both unrestricted and dedicated, from several sources.

**Charitable Foundations:** While many foundations have strict giving limitations and confine their contributions to a particular type of charity, many others have less structured giving programs which could become funding sources for elements of the Plan. Foundations tend to make gifts on a project-specific basis and are frequently less willing to contribute for on-going operating expenses or maintenance costs. Because foundations like to encourage public participation, their gifts are often given on a matching basis with a challenge to the general public to match their con-

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tribution according to a stated formula. Austin is the home of several small and medium sized private foundations that will understand both the need for and the benefit of their possible contributions to the Town Lake Park improvement program. The Municipal Improvements Corporation should research, prepare, submit, receive and monitor grants from private foundations.

**Corporate Contributions:** Whether branches of regional or national companies or locally owned, businesses and corporations frequently support public interest projects like Town Lake Park. Motivated in part by the public relations benefits of participating in funding programs, they view their contributions both as an indication of their company's commitment to the city's well being and as a form of marketing. A number of potential highly visible components of the Plan may be attractive to corporate contributing including specific elements such as light fixtures, benches, fountains, and other items of park furniture, as well as larger scale projects such as buildings, endowment funds for seasonal landscape changes and any other large capital cost items.

**Individual and Family Giving:** The Memorial Planting program along Town Lake, often cited as an example of private support for a public amenity, should be expanded to include the entire Town Lake Park and to offer opportunities for bequests and memorial gifts in addition to landscape elements. Another source of private giving, Family Foundations are required by law to give away substantial portions of income annually. These foundations are frequently overlooked as potential funding sources due to lack of visibility and public awareness.

#### **Public/Private Partnerships**

**Investment Opportunities:** The greatest opportunity for attracting private participation and investment in the Town Lake Corridor, particularly for focal projects such as the Performance Pavilion, Pecan Gardens, and the expanded vendor program, is represented by the structure of the Town Lake Municipal Improvements Corporation. As described earlier, the Corporation can finance and serve as "landlord" to private operators who will manage and operate attractions, entertainment facilities and other revenue-producing uses in specific locations throughout the park. As a nonprofit organization, it offers opportunities for private investors to ground-lease sites and build and occupy their own facilities, or operate facilities built and leased to them by the Corporation. Assuming City ownership of key land parcels for the Pecan Gardens and Performance Pavilion, tax-exempt bonds phased according to an incremental development program could be used to finance construction of

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all or part of these facilities. Revenue sources could come from ground leases, percentage of gate fees on sales and facility rentals.

For attractions such as the Performance Pavilion, the City could structure an operating contract with the manager to share in gate receipts. And, similar to shopping center leases that include a "base rent" and a percentage of sales over specified break-even points, leases in the Pecan Gardens area could be structured to include a percentage of sales to keep base rents lower. Through the Corporation's bonding capacity, structures could be built for restaurants, entertainment facilities, and other vendors within the Pecan Gardens and at other selected locations in the park and leased to private operators. Lease payments would be used to "backstop" the bonds' indebtedness until retirement at which time the facility will become the property of the City. This approach will lower the occupancy costs for restaurateurs and entertainment operators, reduce their risks and encourage them to locate in the park.

Parking facilities, both parking structures and surface lots to serve Town Lake Park, could be financed and constructed by the Municipal Improvements Corporation or a municipal parking authority. Management of the facilities should be by private parking operators unless assumed by the City. Particularly at the Performance Pavilion, parking could represent a very high return on investment given the relatively low cost of constructing surface and lawn parking and the levels of attendance anticipated at performances.

Elsewhere in the United States, performance facilities are frequently constructed as public amenities and managed privately by contract. Management includes scheduling performances, contracting with artists, maintaining and operating the facility and, in some cases, operating food and beverage services, parking, and ticket sales. Applied to the Town Lake Park Performance Pavilion, the contracted operator would be required to pay an annual fee to the City for the exclusive right to operate a publicly-owned facility. While the profits for entertainment management can be substantial, the risks involved are also great and are best left to private management companies.

Contract Service Providers should be managed by the Municipal Improvement Corporation in exchange for licensee fees and a percentage of sales or profits from vending. While it is not anticipated that vendor programs will generate substantial amounts of income, an expanded Contract

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Service Providers program, outlined in the appendix volume of the Plan, will serve to animate areas of Town Lake and should provide enough revenue to the Corporation to cover management costs.

### **Phasing**

Assignment of the Plan's components into phases is based upon several factors. The Short-term Phase, for example, includes actions that are fundamental to the mechanics of carrying out the Plan's objectives. It sets the stage for the Plan's implementation and protects options for future decisions. In addition, it includes improvements that were assigned high priority in the community participation process.

The second, or Mid-term Phase, builds upon the first and includes priority improvements whose implementation is dependent upon prior, initial phase action. Similarly, its components include steps necessary to facilitate improvements proposed in subsequent phases of implementation. Specific improvements of secondary status are also included.

Improvements assigned to the final, Long-term Phase are those whose cost or complexity exceed opportunity for earlier implementation. Others, while lower in priority than their predecessors, are nevertheless important components of the total plan.

The planning strategy is primarily a logical order of sequential steps over time, each phase building upon the last and preparing for the next. Because it is premised upon present-day resources and constraints, it proposes no specific time period within which any or all phases are expected to be completed. In the event that the economy improves significantly or external funding sources become available, the schedule could be accelerated. If, however, other needs or priorities consume limited resources, the process will be slower. What is important is the accomplishment of specific steps in time to protect the opportunities they offer for the future.

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Phase One/Short Term

- Adopt Town Lake Comprehensive Plan
- Establish Town Lake Municipal Improvements Corporation
- Begin acquisition of new Town Lake Park properties as available
- Install comprehensive Contract Service Providers vending program
- Initiate tree planting program and irrigation improvements
- Begin installation of unified signage/graphics system
- Install illumination on Congress Avenue Bridge
- Construct parking structure at Palmer Auditorium
- Vacate Riverside Drive west of S. Lamar Blvd./construct Museum Drive
- Install Cultural Park landscape
- Install traffic and security improvements at Festival Beach
- Install landscape improvements at RBJ Park
- Remove fencing from Fiesta Gardens
- Construct pedestrian/tram bridge over Barton Creek south of Barton Springs Road
- Expand and improve surface parking under MOPAC
- Begin Zilker Botanical Garden improvements
- Install McBeth Recreation Center improvements
- Convert City Street and Bridge Yard to parkland
- Begin development of East Preserve in Colorado River Park
- Complete exercise trail loop between MOPAC and Longhorn Dam
- Begin construction of bicycle and strolling paths
- Begin installation of park structures, furniture and lighting

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### Phase Two/Mid Term

- Continue acquisition of Town Lake Park properties as available
- Start Pecan Gardens development
- Continue tree planting program and irrigation improvements
- Continue installation of park structures, furniture and lighting
- Begin development of Neighborhood Parks
- Connect Red River Street to Festival Beach Drive under IH-35
- Develop neighborhood/cultural facilities at Fiesta Gardens
- Extend S. Lakeshore Blvd. to Montopolis Drive
- Develop Performance Pavilion at Colorado River Park
- Construct site improvements in Barton Springs area of Zilker Park
- Construct pedestrian/tram bridge over Barton Springs Road
- Construct parking structures under MOPAC
- Develop activity anchor at northwest corner of Zilker Park
- Begin development of Urban Waterfront with First Street Promenade
- Expand Eilers Park/Deep Eddy
- Install nature trail from Eilers Park to Red Bud Isle
- Develop Norwood Gardens

### Phase Three/Long Term

- Complete acquisition of Town Lake Park properties
- Complete development of Colorado River Park
- Complete Festival Beach/Fiesta Gardens improvements
- Complete development of Neighborhood Parks

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- \* Complete development of the Urban Waterfront
  - \* Install streetscape improvements along Guadalupe and Trinity Streets
  - \* Install Red Bud Isle site improvements
  - \* Develop the Basin for small boating at east end of Town Lake
  - \* Develop Columbus Drive entrance into Zilker Park
  - \* Remove existing roads/parking lots in Zilker Park per plan
  - \* Construct pedestrian/tram bridge over S. Lamar Blvd
  - \* Construct tram path and install tram service
  - \* Complete Zilker Park improvements
  - \* Complete Pecan Gardens development
  - \* Install water taxi service
  - \* Complete bicycle and strolling path systems
  - \* Complete installation of park structures, furniture and lighting
  - \* Complete tree planting program and irrigation improvements

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