2012: Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) Report

Figure 3-3: Design sketch showing potential point-tower development with expanded open spaces along and to the waterfront.

One of the responsibilities of the Council appointed Waterfront Planning Advisory Board (WPAB) is to provide recommendations to the City on policy and planning to promote excellence in design, development and protection of the waterfront. In 2011 the WPAB identified the South Shore Central sub-district of the Waterfront Overlay as the most likely to face increasing redevelopment challenges. To address this concern the WPAB, with City Council support, made a successful application for assistance from the American Institute of Architects Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program. As part of the SDAT program, Austin hosted a team of national sustainable design experts who worked with over 200 citizens, City staff and officials, and other stakeholders during three days in June 2012.

The final SDAT Report in 2012 cautioned that "A Code is not a Vision" and warned that the provisions of the Waterfront Overlay ordinance would not, in isolation, lead to orderly redevelopment. Like the ROMA Study, the report underscored that a physical framework of open spaces, streets and pedestrian connections was required. The SDAT went further, though, and proposed that this framework be designed as a green infrastructure network which integrates the natural and built environments to raise the environmental quality and beauty of a place.

Figure 3-4: The illustrative plan showing the infrastructure framework proposed in the SDAT Study.

The SDAT Report highlighted the opportunity to explore district-wide value capture scenarios to leverage private redevelopment investments to help finance public infrastructure and other community benefits. In addition, the SDAT Report introduced the notion that development of affordable housing should be part of any redevelopment vision for the area, and the Report set the goal that 15% of the housing development be affordable units.

Key findings and recommendations include:
- "A Code is not a Vision."
- Create a "green infrastructure" network of streets, open space, pedestrian connections and nodes.
- Create methods of district-wide value capture to help finance community benefits.
- Create strategies and methods to include significant affordable housing.

SCW: Draft Vision Framework | 18
2013: University of Texas School of Architecture: Urban Futures Lab Study

The Texas Urban Futures Lab (TxUFL) is an applied research initiative of the Graduate Program in Urban Design at the UT School of Architecture. For spring semester, 2013, TxUFL created a redevelopment scenario for the South Central Waterfront area.

Like the SDAT, the TxUFL emphasized a green infrastructure network of streets and open spaces, and valued the inclusion of affordable housing development. However, this scenario plan focused on accommodating families and thus envisioned the average dwelling unit sizes to be larger than the existing average. As a result, there were fewer total dwellings and fewer total residents at maximum build out.

The TxUFL scenario included an urban rail system and explored the rail’s bridge and transit stop as place-making design opportunities.

![Figure 3-5: Envisioning design possibilities for an urban rail bridge.](image)

Key recommendations include:
- Creating family friendly housing with larger but fewer units overall.
- Maximizing green infrastructure (including green roofs, water conservation, native plants, sponge parks, and rain gardens).
- Incorporate urban rail into area master planning.

2013: Sustainable Places Project

During 2012-2013 the City of Austin participated as a regional partner in the Sustainable Places Project (SPP), funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A key SPP initiative was the development of a computer-based analytic tool, known as Envision Tomorrow Plus, to assess and compare the financial, environmental and social impacts of potential redevelopment scenarios.

Using Envision Tomorrow Plus, the SPP modeled three redevelopment scenarios for the future of the South Central Waterfront area: Scenario 1 following the current trend and existing regulations; Scenario 2 based on the vision of the Report of the Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT); and Scenario 3 from the UT School of Architecture/Texas Urban Futures Lab.

In a public demonstration of the analytic tool in May 2013, the Sustainable Places Project compared the three scenarios for the South Central Waterfront across thirty-plus performance indicators, including return on investment and financial feasibility, impacts to water quality, impacts to municipal budgets, potential for district-wide value capture, jobs-to-housing ratios, overall density, walkability, net increase/decrease in open space, and energy savings from green infrastructure.

![Figure 3-6: Example of development without a master plan. Access to lake is blocked.](image)

![Figure 3-7: Example of development with a master plan. Access to lake is achieved.](image)

Key findings include:
- Current regulations will not guarantee or achieve waterfront access, affordable housing, superior urban design, better water quality, or increase public green space.
- Master planned scenarios would capture more revenue than the existing trend projects.
- Master planned scenarios create hundreds of affordable housing units vs. none guaranteed by existing trend.
$1.2 + Billion in private investment
Bouldin Creek Between 1st St & S Congress
3D Animation
Existing Development: Evaporation
Phase 1: Condensation
Phase 2: Precipitation
Phase 3: Infiltration
## Pro Forma Summary Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:1.5 Jobs/Housing Ratio</td>
<td>3,983 Jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6,080 Housing Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.6% Affordable Housing</td>
<td>1,069 Commercial Parking Spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24% Commercial Parking</td>
<td>4,441 Total Parking Spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.94 Average F.A.R.</td>
<td>12.4% Average IRR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$304,338,763 Total Acquisition Costs</td>
<td>$1,974,967,940 Total Construction Costs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>