

Mayor and City Council
City of Austin
124 West 8th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

July 21, 1999

Dear Mayor and City Council:

The Coalition for Town Lake Park appreciates the time and commitment of the stakeholders for working together on the master plan for Town Lake Park and wholeheartedly supports and encourages the Austin City Council to move forward quickly on approval of the Palmer Pavilion and Long Performing Arts Center facilities. This is an incredible opportunity for our community, and these facilities should not be burdened by any process delays.

The Coalition for Town Lake Park supports the creation of a cultural/urban park surrounding the new facilities for all the citizens of Austin. We agree with the Guiding Principles and Mission Statement prepared by the twelve member Town Lake Park Advisory Group which supported many key elements of the Town Lake Park Comprehensive Plan.

Austin's great urban park should address the following issues:

1. Create space for activities that draw people to the park on a consistent basis for all Austinites to enjoy; a park alive with activity and people.
2. Create interesting activities that will occupy the pre-performance and post performance audiences, extending their time in the park and lessening peak traffic events.
3. Provide access to, through and from the park and its venues, including access to the water's edge.
4. Be a focal point of civic pride.

The Coalition for Town Lake Park requests the following:

1. The Coalition for Town Lake Park is a stakeholder and requests designation as an official stakeholder in the master planning process for Town Lake Park.
2. The Coalition asks the City of Austin to commit to completing the park amenities concurrent with the completion of the Palmer renovation, construction of the garage, civic center and the CSC and City Hall developments. Planning should include physical and visual direct connections between Town Lake Park and the developments across Town Lake. The City should make available the feasibility study for construction and maintenance of the park. It is necessary to investigate alternative funding sources to both allow completion of all park amenities in a shorter time frame and to ensure world class maintenance.
3. The Coalition recommends that City Council delay the decision on closure of Riverside Drive until the comprehensive traffic study for downtown is complete in order to assess the traffic impact in a larger context. We also recommend that Riverside Drive be explored as an amenity to the park allowing greater access, creating open space for a promenade, and making it

visually appealing, as opposed to viewing it solely for cut-through traffic. The master plan should be designed to accommodate Riverside Drive, in the event that data supports it remaining open. Considerations:

- The Town Lake Advisory Group recommended that the city "Retain Riverside Drive and redesign as a 'Great Street' or 'Great Park Boulevard'."
- The WHM preliminary traffic analysis report suggests that closing Riverside Drive will negatively impact the flow of traffic into and around downtown and the south side of Town Lake.
- Austin has a dearth of east-west travel routes. Riverside Drive is one of those routes and should be available as an important short and long term vehicular travel route.
- It is essential that circulation through the proposed park be maintained to benefit those citizens who need better physical access to the interior of the park, and those who could benefit from the availability of free on-street parking as an alternative to pay parking in the garage.
- Design enhancement of Riverside Drive will make it available for traffic flow during peak traffic hours and for recreational and open space activities at appropriate times with road closures on weekends and for special events.
- The current park budget includes \$4,700,000 for demolition of Riverside Drive and road improvements surrounding the park. This represents 18% of the entire budget. Some or all of these funds should be used for internal park improvements or "Great Street" enhancements to Riverside Drive.

4. Open up the planning process for the final master plan of the park and its amenities to other stakeholders. The Coalition, specifically, would like the opportunity to augment EDAW's plan prior to completion and adoption of the final master plan to explore other possibilities for park amenities and commercial uses in the park.

Retail and restaurant uses. We recommend approval of park and venue user compatible retail uses, with specific emphasis on full-service restaurant space, such as thrive in other great parks (i.e.: Bryant Park and Lincoln Park), in addition to smaller, less formal cafe space, outdoor dining facilities, and recreational or cultural retail such as sports equipment rentals, gift shop, etc. EDAW's retail consultant recommended at least 10,000 to 12,000 square feet of retail/food service space even with "the 'ground rule' that only on-site patrons at Town Lake Park should be served by retail concessions in the Park (which) reduces the market support and results in a smaller concessions program." We respectfully disagree with this "ground rule."

Considerations:

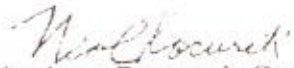
- The Town Lake Advisory Group recommended that the park should also include "places for eating and talking...."
- Park and people-compatible commercial uses are present in and around most of the world's great parks and are an enhancement to park uses.
- These spaces can create income streams which benefit park maintenance funding.

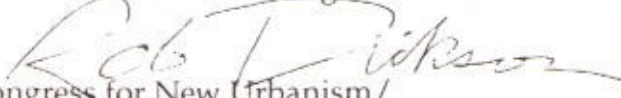
Park amenities. Urban and cultural park amenities are necessary to make this a truly unique experience for Austin's citizens and visitors. Town Lake Park should stand apart from the wonderful greenbelt parks in Austin.
Considerations:

- The Town Lake Advisory Group recommended that Town Lake Park should be "a garden of active delights with places to see and experience, things to do and watch."
- The park is downtown and can be another focal point and an amenity for downtown revitalization.
- Austin has an opportunity to create a park that can be experienced, not just used. It can be interactive and educational for children, accessible to the elderly and disabled and should have areas of respite for its citizens. Selective use of the best features of urban park amenities from other cities is appropriate.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you to make this a great asset to our city. This is an opportunity to do something exceptional.

Respectfully,


Austin Area Research Organization


Congress for New Urbanism/
Members


Downtown Austin Alliance


The Real Estate Council of Austin


Austin Hotel/Motel Association


Consulting Engineers Council of Texas
Austin Branch


Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce

Cc ARTS Center Stage
Friends of the Park
The Junior League of Austin
South Central Coalition of Neighborhoods