

WALLER CREEK

Regeneration and Curation

CMG Landscape Architecture + Public Architecture

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WALLER CREEK

Regeneration and Curation

On the east side of Austin's downtown a series of lively public spaces are woven together by an enchanting urban creek that links the University of Texas to the City's central open space at Lady Bird Lake. A shady baldcypress-lined corridor marks the creek's path through the city, and what was once a flood-prone urban drainage has been transformed into one of America's great urban promenades. A wonderfully episodic and immersive landscape combines culture and recreation with nuanced moments of respite and access to nature.

*Catalyzed by the *Regeneration and Curation of Waller Creek* and the City's creative and entrepreneurial culture, the surrounding neighborhoods are flourishing. A collection of unique cultural organizations and businesses have emerged around the banks and parks of the Creek, bringing together a diverse mix of people in one of those rare urban communities that is truly a great place to live, work, and visit from afar. Activated by an eclectic mix of music, food, art, recreational and civic event programming, Waller Creek is a distinctly Austin experience.*

The CMG-Public Architecture proposal for Waller Creek merges Austin's distinctive cultural context with the experiential and ecological qualities of a Hill Country Creek and the social and economic vitality of a grand urban boulevard. Waller Creek will become the signature feature in an ensemble of interconnected and coherently organized public spaces that are legible at the scale of the city. Together, the *Armature* and the *Score for Public Life* will draw on the City's creative and entrepreneurial culture to activate a wide variety of public spaces and catalyze economic development.

A New Paradigm – A Living Institution

The Regeneration and Curation of Waller Creek will create a new paradigm; a living cultural institution that joins capital improvements with cultural programs, public-private partnerships, district level economic development, and innovative sustainability planning. Our vision is predicated on a distinctly 21st century urbanism that is networked, participatory, and interactive, blending material culture, ecology and place making, with digital media, public art, and community building.

DESIGN FOR REGENERATION

Living Systems

Ecological systems are maximized and synthesized with public access, integration of the tunnel facilities and slope stabilization techniques. A variety of plant communities and aquatic habitat improvements are proposed to expand opportunities for native aquatic, terrestrial and avian species. The Creek is conceived as a public garden and punctuated by a series of thematic landscapes and novel ecologies.

Episodic and Immersive

The unique qualities of the depressed creek and the surrounding urban context are translated into distinct episodes and immersive experiences that draw on our innate attraction to water, simultaneously expressing contemporary culture and providing ecological services.

Five Major Public Spaces

With the creek as a natural armature a sequence of five major public spaces activate the District. Each space has a distinctive character and mix of programs. The synergistic relationship between the creek and the broader Waller Creek District is fostered by the development of six distinct neighborhoods.

Connecting Creek and City

Connectivity is provided by a continuous Creekside Multi-use Trail and Cityside Promenades that are linked by accessible ramps and stairs at each street intersection. A series of unique markers will orient visitors from Lake to headwaters and from street to creek. We will build upon Austin's Great Streets program, Urban Rail, and the work of trail and bicycle organizations to establish an integrated approach to mobility and improvement of the public realm.



PLANNING FOR AN URBAN DISTRICT

Waller Creek Eco-District | District level planning and infrastructure integration are brought together with the establishment of an Eco-District that will provide both a development incentive and a method to measure sustainability at the neighborhood scale.

Connecting Downtown and East Austin at Waller Creek | The connection between Downtown and East Austin is strengthened by a series of improvements and programs that are designed to enhance existing connections, anticipate future mobility programs and foster a sense of community that bridges I-35.

Heritage | The palpable sense of history and community embodied in cultural and historic resources is prized with the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures.

THE SCORE FOR PUBLIC LIFE

Acting at the scale of the city block while envisioning the needs of the region, our focus is to draw on the diversity of individuals and local communities in the creation of a dynamic place. Although we have just begun, our process of listening, learning, and communicating with stakeholders and potential partners has thoroughly informed our proposal.

Moving forward, we will expand this process to further refine the design and continue to build a responsive, rather than prescriptive, program. By creating opportunities for people to begin working, playing, and learning through the use of quick build prototyping and temporary uses we will reveal the most successful programs and uses.

We will work with the Conservancy to develop its program capacity, build partnerships, and establish volunteer networks to make stewardship an effective part of Waller Creek's future success.

Public Art Program | The curatorial approach to art will include interactive, ephemeral, and permanent works, and all art at Waller Creek will be about place. Whether it's Andy Goldsworthy's subtle response to site, or Ai Weiwei's response to the cultural landscape, each work will be about and for the unique culture that is Waller Creek, Austin Texas.