

DESIGN CONCEPT SUMMARY

Walking along Waller Creek for the first time, we were struck by its raw beauty, the quality of light reflected on the limestone walls, the peaceful isolation that winds its way from Waterloo Park to Lady Bird Lake. We noticed its inhabitants a few turtles, a few birds, a few bats, a few fish and the homeless. We relished the shaded walks and the old bridges, the nooks and the crannies, the steep banks. We enjoyed the overflowing planting that attracted monarchs and bees, the gurgling sound of water over its karst bed. Our design proposal celebrates that environment, amplifies its beauty and engages the nature of Waller Creek with its urban nature. We propose to KEEP WALLER WILD, a carved haven of healthy wilderness where people and wildlife mingle, a mysterious journey through a romantic landscape in the heart of the growing Capital of Texas, an invitation to all Austinites to recreate, celebrate and preserve this incredible resource.

The mile-long WallerWalk winds its way up the Creek through the Delta's islands and the Lower Wild, skims the shores of Palm Park, surfaces at the Urban Canyon, descends back to the Creek in the Upper Wild, ending on the great lawn on Waterloo Park. The majestic figures of more than 300 bald cypress mark the length of the creek. Lit at night, they discretely give Waller Creek a distinctive presence in the city and a safe experience to enjoy the Creek at all hours. New bridges connect the city to the Walk and the Creek, expanded sidewalks at existing bridges become overlooks onto the creek, and GetDowns an opportunity for creek direct access. On the creek banks and in the park's wetlands, all species of native plants grow and attract wildlife. In the Urban Canyon, new high rises come down to the water. Public uses occupy their lower levels overlooking the Creek. Children crowd Palm Park's expanded 6.5 acres while the old Palm School is transformed into Waller Creek Central



and a host for community activities. Waterloo Park focuses on events with a new stage and cafe building. Redevelopment in East Austin catalyzes a connection to the Creek's Urban Canyon with pedestrian amenities under the highway. Continuous bike routes along the Creek and through the city connect east to west to north to south in leisurely or zippy rides. Bioswales separating bikes from traffic on city streets cascade from the East side to the Creek. Paired with more than 10,000 new street trees, these bioswales are essential to the Creek's long term ecological health.

These design interventions are the physical expressions of a larger vision which is rooted in our observations and understanding of Austin's urban landscape. We see the watershed as the project's boundary. This essential planning principle in our design is set to keep Waller Creek healthy over the long term and a significant and visible asset for the city at large. The design celebrates the importance and value of water in Austin through a Sister System - a network of bioswales and other stormwater treatment techniques embedded as landscape amenities throughout the watershed beginning in East Austin and to the west of the Creek. Waller Creek is Austin's missing street and our design considers the Creek as Street. This second principle ensures that planning and design, from ordinances to details, weave the creek more completely into the urban fabric of downtown Austin and respond to a fine-grained and unique urbanity that exists nowhere else.

Clarifying the creek is our third principle and keeping Waller wild depends on it. The design organizes the mile and a half long corridor creek in three distinct reaches. The Lower Wild, the Urban Canyon, and the Upper Wild form a sustainable district where ecology, equity and economy balance in distinct ways. From Lady Bird Lake to Palm Park, the Lower Wild conveys the poetic and recreational experience of being immersed in nature; the Urban Canyon, from Palm Park to 7th Street, is where creek meets city with the most contrast in a lively and densely-developed condition, and the Upper Wild, from 7th to Waterloo, blends the wild creek with the civic qualities of urban parklands.

This proposal believes in Austin and Waller Creek; it is not an overhaul but careful crafting of design and planning moves that will build upon the richness that is there and enhance the whole.