

# The Real Estate Council

## Of Austin, Inc.

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FAX TRANSMISSION - 3 PAGE

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Date: June 25, 1999

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Attached is a draft, I emphasize draft, position for our Coalition for Town Lake Park. Please edit, rewrite, comment, and return to 320-4152 for compilation. It is important to have all our groups on board. If you disagree or have concerns about any item, please contact us so we can negotiate the issue/language.

Laurie is setting up meetings with the "stakeholder groups" and will notify you as soon as dates are set.

Thank you for your participation. Together we can make a difference.

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The Coalition for Town Lake Park supports and encourages the implementation of the Guiding Principles and Mission Statement prepared by the twelve member Town Lake Advisory Group. The work of this group formed the basis for the approval by the citizens of Austin in a public referendum for the redevelopment of Palmer Auditorium and Town Lake Park.

Our coalition specifically recommends attention to and approval of the following:

1. Financial feasibility. It is essential that the financial feasibility includes the long term high quality maintenance of the park. Considerations:

▪ As an urban park in Austin's highest density area, the park will require more intensive maintenance than many other Austin parks.

▪ The Town Lake Advisory Group recommended that the city "secure funding for all development as well as long term high quality maintenance for facilities and grounds and on-site security."

▪ The Town Lake Advisory Group recommended that "all potential sources of revenue for operations and maintenance" be investigated.

2. Riverside Drive. Keep Riverside Drive open and make appropriate modifications to make it compatible to meet the needs of both park users and motorists. 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.

3. Timing. The timeline for completion of the park needs to be reduced. (Completion currently scheduled for 2013.) Considerations;

▪ City of Austin must investigate alternative funding sources to allow completion of all park amenities to meet the same schedule as the completion of the Palmer renovation and the construction of the garage and civic center.

▪ Consideration should be given to leveraging the car rental tax future revenue stream through issuance of bonds to raise current capital for park improvements.

4. Retail and restaurant uses. We recommend approval of park and venue user compatible retail uses, with specific emphasis on a full-service restaurant space of at least 7,000 square feet (in addition to smaller, less formal café space) and recreational or cultural retail such as sports equipment rentals, gift shop, etc. 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.

5. 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.

The Coalition for Town Lake Park supports the creation of Town Lake Park and supports the EDAW preliminary plan as a starting point. Our coalitions' goal is to enhance the proposed plan and transform this plan from a "good project" into a "great project" that the Town Lake Advisory Group planned for and the citizens of Austin voted for, expect and deserve. This is a park for all of Austin and will be appreciated and utilized by our entire community.

We strongly encourage the Council to plan this park to accommodate the school children, the elderly, business people, patrons and residents from downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods, the performers and their audiences, joggers and other folks hungry for outdoor and indoor recreation, entertainment, relaxation, cultural and educational opportunities.

Please do not miss the opportunity to do something exceptional!