



Seaholm Power Plant Reuse

Summary

In 1996 the City Council resolved to preserve Seaholm for a major public use following decommissioning and remediation. Decommissioning by Austin Energy began in 2000.

Seaholm decommissioning activities have been further delayed by the discovery of additional PCB contaminated materials. Completion of the field activities will be followed by four to six months of closure report preparation and report review by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. These activities will be continuing through 2002.

Currently the status of on-site decommissioning and remediation activities to date are: The removal of all equipment from the Turbine Generator Building, Water Intake Structure and the old Pump Room 100 % complete. Asbestos abatement is 98% complete. Lead based paint abatement of all the stacks is 100% complete. Repainting of the stacks is 100% complete. Lead abatement and repainting of the boilers is still on-going. PCB and mercury contamination removal has been delayed and is now scheduled to be completed in 2002 under a new contract.

Status

In November 1999, City Council passed a resolution directing the City Manager “to make recommendations outlining next steps for decommissioning the Seaholm Power Plant and soliciting proposals for the reuse of the plant.” In December 1999, the City hired Sherry Kafka Wagner, public attractions consultant, to help identify and execute these “next steps”.

In concert with Ms. Wagner’s recommendations, a City Manager’s Office memo was issued in March 2000 that recommended that, prior to the City’s soliciting for proposals, an urban design and redevelopment master plan be generated to guide the City in making decisions about the entire district around the power plant. This master plan will recommend: type(s) and location(s) for future visitor parking for Seaholm, an intermodal transportation network with possible light rail and intercity rail connections, and how the district and the Seaholm Reuse Project may best link and integrate the adjacent downtown and parkland areas.

In June 2000 Council authorized the hiring of ROMA Design Group to create this master plan which will make recommendations about the urban design and economic redevelopment of the area surrounding the power plant facility. Several drafts of the Master plan were done in conjunction with stakeholder review at each stage. Boards and Commissions reviews were completed in August 2001. A final draft has been prepared to incorporate comments from boards and Commissions and a special Pedestrian and Bicycle stakeholder meeting. The Seaholm District Master Plan will be presented to City Council for consideration of adoption in February/March 2002.

With completion of the [Seaholm District Master Plan](#), The Seaholm Reuse Project will be reinitiated. Ms. Wagner has enlisted the assistance of students at Dartmouth University’s Tuck School of Business to prepare a Feasibility and Economic Impact Analysis for a Major Cultural Attraction at Seaholm. A project prospectus and solicitation-of-interest document will be developed for possible distribution to prospective reuse developers. Final selection of a developer for the reuse of Seaholm could be complete by Fall 2002.

The City has also completed the historical documentary photography for the three Seaholm buildings that have been identified as eligible for listing on the National Historic Register: the Turbine Building, the Water Intake Structure and the Fuel Oil Building. This photography documents the plant with all its equipment in place, prior to the final demolition and remediation phase that began in July 2000. This photographic collection will be made publicly available at the Austin History Center collection later this year.

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Description

The Seaholm Power Plant, built between 1950 and 1958, faces Town Lake on West César Chávez Street. It is composed of five gas/oil generation units (100 megawatts total when it functioned) and no longer generates power. The building features a towering turbine room 110 by 235 feet, with clerestory windows above flanking aisles, and a 65-foot-high ceiling. Two lower floors contain an additional 75,000 square feet. In all, the building has more than 110,000 square feet of useable floor area. An electric utility substation, transmission and distribution facilities, and a utility microwave communications center are also located at Seaholm.

A number of planning efforts have recognized Seaholm's significance and potential for adaptive reuse. The City of Austin's 1984 Historic Resources survey targeted Seaholm for its highest priority rating of building to be preserved. The City's Town Lake Park Comprehensive Plan suggests that the plant be "converted into an activity center complementary to the area." In the fall of 1997, the R/UDAT Revisited Team reiterated its earlier support for Seaholm's cultural reuse.

Basic Data

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