

## *Downtown*

# *At a Glance*

*April 2002*



### Art in Public Places

#### New Project Description

Established in 1985 by City Ordinance, the Art in Public Places Program commissions site-specific public art for city buildings and parks with 1% of construction budgets (up to a cap of \$200,000). The Austin Arts Commission provides oversight and appoints a seven-member Art in Public Places Panel composed of respected local visual arts and design professionals to make program recommendations.

### Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (Interim)

On August 15, 2001, the ARCH moved to an interim location at 400 Nueces. The City added an overnight shelter program for 73 men at the interim site and amended CAHA's contract to include operation of the shelter. The shelter has been operating at or near full capacity since it opened.

### Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (Permanent)

The facility will be named the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH). It will be an expansion of the current ARCH, but it will remain a place where people in homeless situations can access numerous resources to help them work toward self-sufficiency.

The City will build the facility and will provide funding for operations. The City's Primary Care Department will operate the health clinic. A request for proposals will be released in mid-2002 to solicit an operator.

The physical design of the facility is complete. The construction of the project was put out for bid in February of 2002. The contract for construction is scheduled to be awarded in April, and construction is scheduled to begin in July. The expected date of completion for construction is July of 2003. The estimated cost of the project is approximately \$8.1 million.

### CBD 2001 Sidewalk Projects

#### New Project

This is the construction, reconstruction or widening of sidewalks, curbs, curb ramps and retaining walls on 21 different segments in the downtown area. 5,760 linear feet of sidewalk, ranging from 4 feet (widening) to 10 feet wide. Project is in preliminary design; construction is expected to start December 2002 or January 2003.



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## Civic Dialogue: Civic Art and Design in Downtown Austin

### New Project

The City of Austin and Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) are facilitating a civic dialogue on Friday, May 31 and Saturday, June 1, 2002 entitled “Civic Art and Design in Downtown Austin: Exploring Placemaking Possibilities.” TCA is the state agency charged with the development of a receptive climate for the arts in Texas. The City’s goals for this discussion are to begin a discussion about how the arts and artists can work in the urban built environment and to encourage the development of partnerships between artists and public and private entities. TCA’s goal is to have Austin’s Civic Dialogue become a model for other Texas cities, in their efforts to encourage community discussions about art in the urban built environment.

In the last few years there has been much discussion in the community and media concerning the “loss of the Austin nature and character” as downtown Austin is redeveloped. Austin’s sense of place and cultural identity is the sum of all the amenities of Austin – the physical, historical, cultural, and social – that contribute to Austin’s overall quality of life. The civic dialogue will explore how the creative resources of our community can play a role in preserving, enhancing, and creating the best and most enduring qualities of Austin.

“Civic Art and Design in Downtown Austin: Exploring Placemaking Possibilities” is the start of an important discussion. Stakeholders that are actively participating in the revitalization and development of downtown Austin have been invited to participate and include representatives from city/county/state government, civic organizations, businesses, developers, design professionals, planners, urban designers, social service organizations, educators, funding sources, and artists and arts workers. The dialogue follows a well-proven meeting process call “Open Space” where participants are invited to convene sessions on issues they most care about and is designed to be an opportunity to learn from many varied points of view. Themes that will be discussed include: 1) enriching and sustaining Austin’s sense of place and identity, 2) identifying how artists and art can contribute to Austin’s distinct cultural expression in the meanings, uses, and forms of the city, and 3) identifying ways to support creative partnerships and collaborations.

## Convention Center Expansion

The exterior skin is almost complete and the building is entirely enclosed. Sitework is underway. Interior finishes are well underway, working east to west (the building is two blocks wide). The roof, mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems are substantially complete. Estimated date of Substantial Completion is April 29, 2002.



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Downtown Design Guidelines

City staff have developed recommendations for the implementation of the Guidelines and are bringing them forward in April 2002.

Downtown Public Improvement District

The DAA is currently circulating petitions that will, subject to the reauthorization process of Chapter 372 of the Local Government Code, extend the PID for another five-year period.

Heritage Austin

The Heritage Society of Austin is rewriting and updating their report Heritage Austin: A Community Value Based Vision. This effort will be completed in May 2002.

Mexican-American Cultural Center (MACC)

Due to higher than anticipated cost estimates and severe utility conflicts and issues, the project is somewhat on hold. We are trying to work out some issues with Austin Energy and Water & Waste on some major utility conflicts that effect our schedule. The biggest obstacle at this point the relocation of the high-tension electrical power lines that run across our site. If these lines are not relocated by May 2003, we will have to wait another year (May 2004) before we can start construction of Phase I of the MACC. There is a meeting scheduled for April 22nd to try and resolve this issue. Additional funding is still required at this point as well. We have completed the Design Development Phase as of April 5th.

Near Term CBD Transportation Projects

New Project

The Transportation, Planning & Sustainability Department Staff has spent the last two years studying how to best shape the future of accessibility to and mobility within Downtown, looking at short and long term, operational and policy issues, public and private opportunities, and analyzing them from both a technical and an aesthetic view. Staff is bringing forward for public discussion a list of short-term low-cost roadway projects and set of standards for the streetscapes of Downtown. These include but are not limited to improved signal timings, intersection improvements and managed lanes. These Staff recommendations are conceptual in nature and have not yet been adopted by City Council (scheduled for June 2002).

Palmer Events Center

Bid Package 1, providing for the removal of the Riverside Center building at 901 W. Riverside Dr., was substantially completed July 6th 2000. Bid Package 2 construction included relocation of some existing utilities and placement of new as well as the placement of 376 drilled piers that will become the foundation for the new Palmer Events Center and Parking Facility. Bid Package 2 was substantially completed November 22, 2000. Bid Package 3 construction contract was awarded to MW Builders by Council November 9, 2000. This work includes construction of the new Palmer Events Center and Parking Facility and started on December 5, 2000. The Parking Facility was opened November 14, 2001, and



the Palmer Events Center by June 2002. The access roads to the new Palmer Events Center and Parking Facility were substantially completed November 14, 2001. The first Landscaping contract for the area around both the Events Center and Parking Facility started in January 2002, with completion anticipated in August 2002. The new Palmer Events Center is on track to be open in June 2002 to allow the City to fulfill its commitment to the transfer the existing Palmer Auditorium to Arts Centerstage on June 1, 2002. Arts Centerstage is expected to immediately start their conversion into the future Long Ctr., for an anticipated completion in the fall of 2004.

## Republic Square

A conceptual draft design for Republic Square Park has been completed. The proposed plan is a collaborative effort between the artist, the landscape architect, and the Republic Square partners. The 'picturesque' style design combines hardscape paths cutting through green spaces with a promenade between a double row of trees on three sides of the park. The artwork is a waterwall and three monumental columns with water coursing down them. The conceptual design will be presented to the same four boards and commissions during the month of May that saw it in the preliminary design stage. Austin Parks Foundation and Downtown Austin Alliance will then use this design to raise funds for construction.

## Seaholm Power Plant Reuse

The Seaholm District Master Plan will be presented to City Council for consideration of adoption in mid-May 2002.

## Town Lake Park, Phase I

The anticipated start date for the Cultural Landscape construction contract was delayed by 75 days with the contractor unable to secure bonding caused by changes in the insurance industry due to the events of September 11, 2001. Consequently the construction will not be completed until August of 2002, which will lag the new Palmer Events Center opening by approximately 60 days.

## Waller Creek Flood-Management and Water Quality Improvements

There have been discussions between the City and LCRA on the development of a cooperative financing plan for project design and construction. In addition a feasibility study is being conducted by the US Army Corps of Engineers to determine the possible level of Federal cost participation in the Waller Creek Tunnel project. We anticipate the results of the Corps evaluation will be available by the end of 2002. This does not guarantee Federal funding for the project.