

DRAFT VISION FRAMEWORK



PALM
DISTRICT
PLANNING

FEBRUARY 2022

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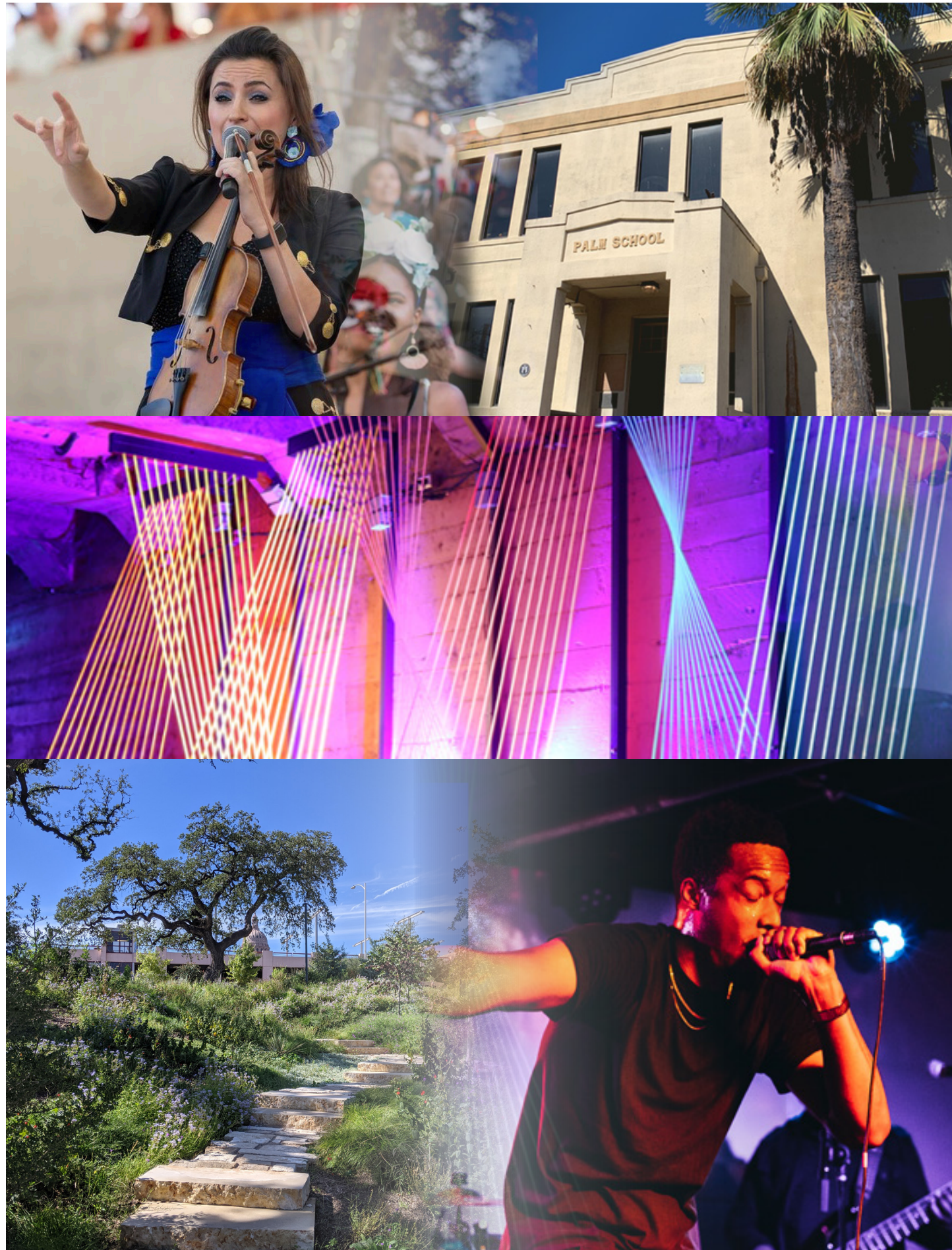
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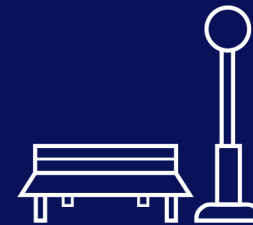
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*** Key Opportunities identified on map series represent sites that are controlled by a variety of public and private entities, and not all sites are under the direct ownership of the City of Austin. The Vision is intended to provide an aspirational view of how the district could develop over time. Implementation will require a range of actions by the City of Austin and its partners. While Palm Park is currently owned by the City of Austin, the adjacent Palm School is owned by Travis County, and Travis County has been undertaking a process to explore options for this site. See <https://www.traviscountytx.gov/planning-budget/economic-development-strategic-investments/palm-school> additional information.*



VISION

The Palm District is a vibrant historic hub of downtown where the past is honored, culture is celebrated, and the future is shaped.



Dense transit-oriented development is balanced with history and natural spaces creating physical connections that invite people to move easily to and through the district.



The district is a dynamic place, growing and evolving, while actively retaining families and individuals who have traditionally called this place home.



Creativity and innovation are cultivated, and people from Austin and beyond are welcome to live, relax, work, play, learn, and connect with others.

THE DISTRICT

The Palm District Planning Initiative study area encompasses the eastern portion of downtown Austin. It is bound by 15th Street to the north, Lady Bird Lake to the south, I-35 to the east and Trinity Street to the west.

VISION ELEMENTS

As the district evolves, the plan will guide development and programming to achieve the vision for a vibrant, accessible and successful district. Informed by an understanding of area history, the elements of the vision are inclusive growth, culture, connection and nature. The desired outcomes for each of these elements are outlined in the following sections.

★ INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Growth in the district will provide a prosperous future for longtime and recent residents and for established and new businesses. This future will provide opportunities to prioritize and celebrate the district’s cultural and historical institutions. Focusing on these important assets will enhance the entertainment, live music, tourism, convention, and innovation market sectors.

★ CULTURE

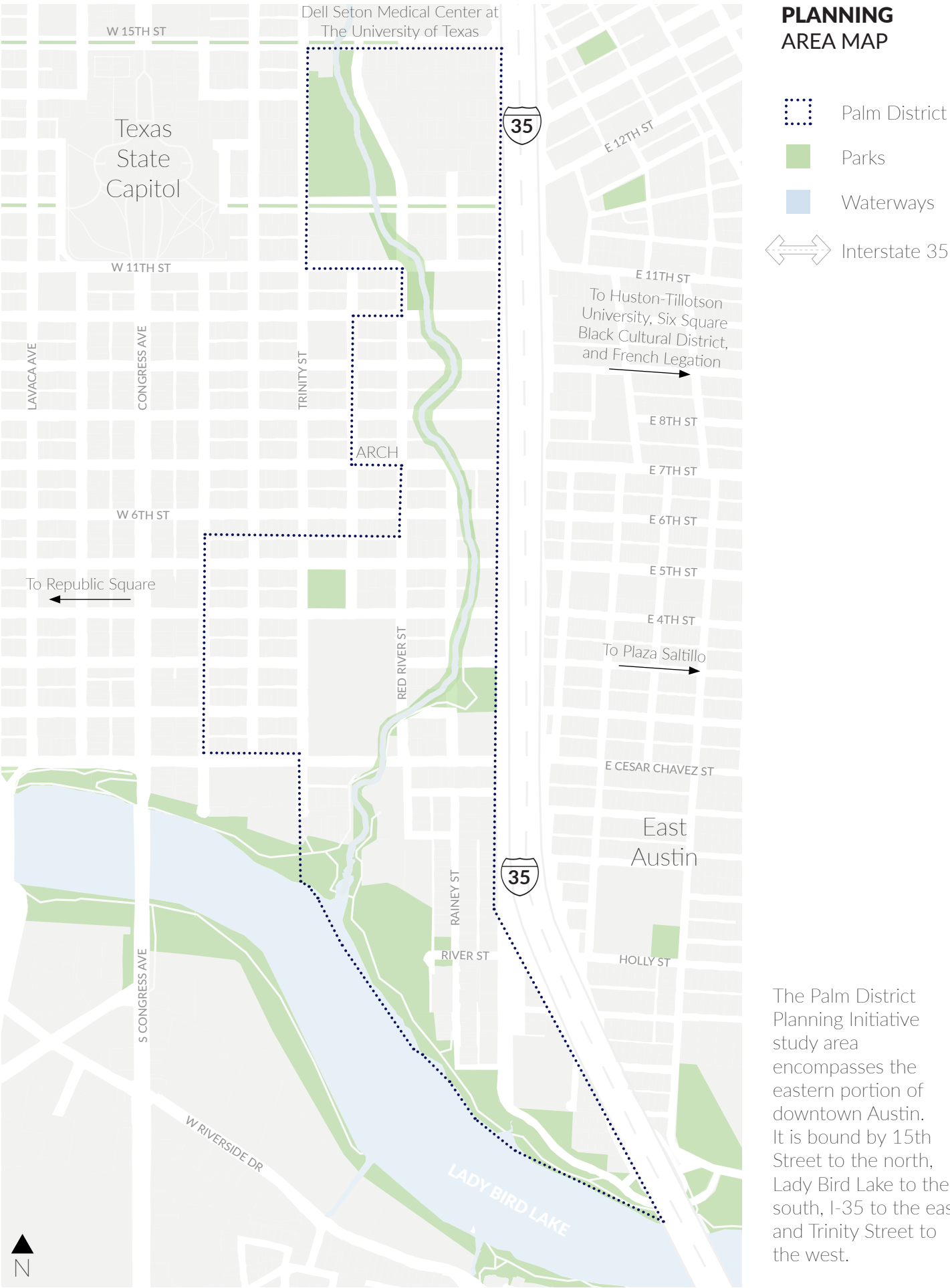
The district will become a destination that celebrates its multi-cultural heritage by supporting and expanding the Red River Cultural District’s live music and entertainment economy and by preserving and enhancing the Mexican-American heritage community assets and their stories.

★ CONNECTION

Physical, cultural and social connections will be strengthened within downtown and between East Austin and downtown.

★ NATURE

The natural environment will be preserved and enhanced by restoring existing natural and open spaces and pursuing high standards of sustainable design and development with a focus on green infrastructure.



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AN INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE, AND PROSPEROUS PALM DISTRICT...

- Acknowledges, integrates, and prioritizes history and cultural heritage into new and redevelopment.
- Establishes anti-displacement policies, such as a right to return, for the District's existing, lower income residents.
- Makes housing a priority, not just a luxury, for all socioeconomic groups. All development should produce affordable housing and preserve existing affordable housing.
- Increases the real and perceived sense of safety in the District by providing lighting, accessibility, signage, staffing, and a continuum of care that includes adequate shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness.
- Leverages redevelopment opportunities and increased transit options to increase housing density and walkability with options to live, work, learn, and play.
- Supports all aspects of the local creative economy and artists of color.
- Promotes destinations for families and children.
- Creates and promotes recreational spaces and destinations as downtown amenities.
- Ensures the redevelopment and expansion of the Convention Center creates a world-class community-friendly facility that contributes positively to Austin and Central Texas' economy and enhances the surrounding public realm.
- Ensures that the economic benefits of the Innovation District reach all Austinites, especially historically excluded populations.
- Promotes a thriving retail environment to foster small business ownership or creation and support economic well-being, including first-floor retail activations.
- Encourages private development to positively contribute to the public realm.
- Provides a variety of affordable options for people to access and get around the district.
- Creates opportunities to use publicly-owned properties for dense, mixed-income housing, places for cultural celebration, and to preserve those sites that are of historical, social, and cultural significance.



INCLUSIVE GROWTH VISION FRAMEWORK

- ★ Key Opportunities
- ▭ Palm District
- Parks
- Waterways

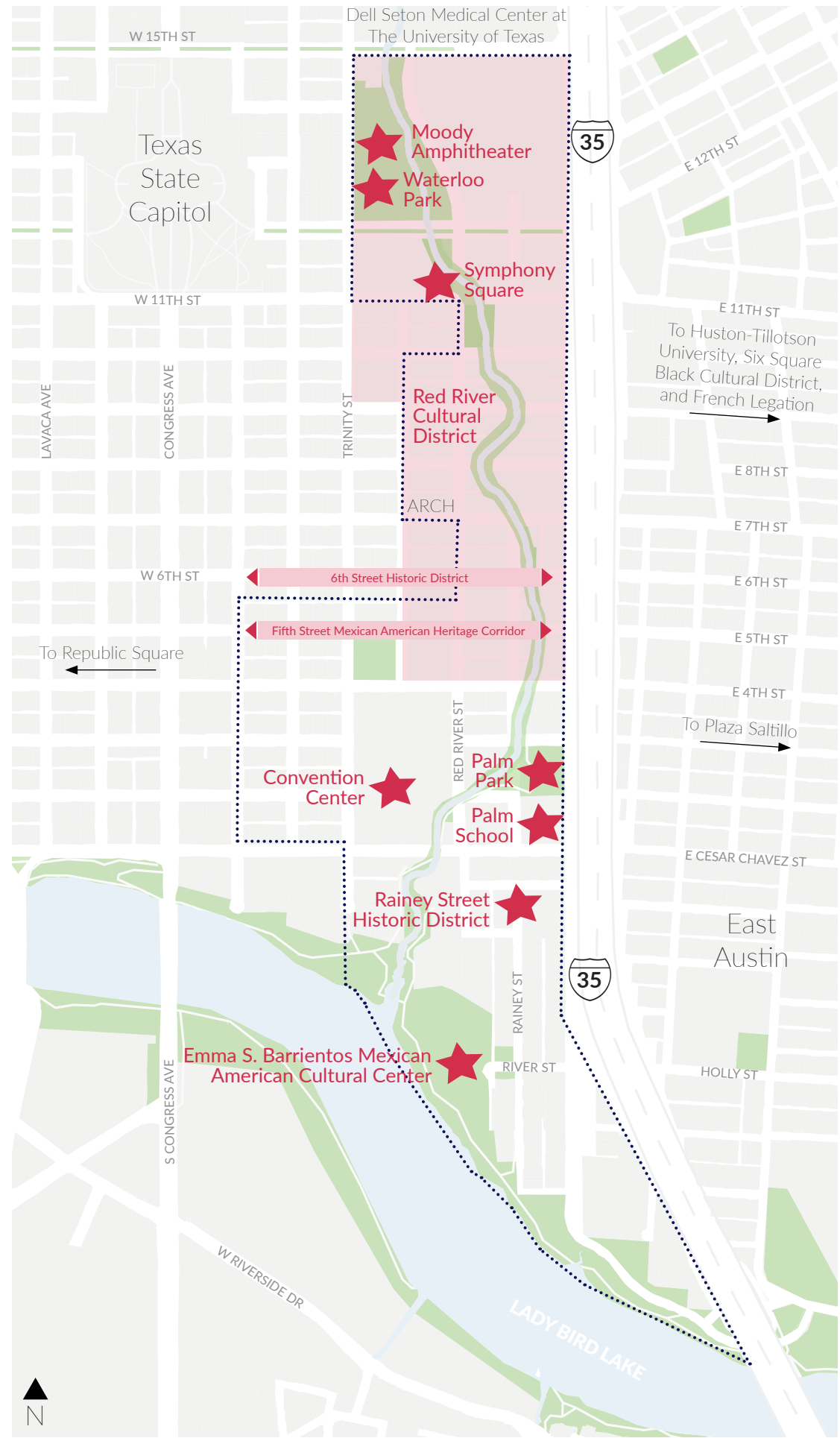
INCLUSIVE GROWTH PARTNERS & COORDINATION RESOURCES

- » Capital City Innovation District
- » Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
- » Austin Convention Center
- » Downtown Austin Alliance
- » Travis County
- » Homeless support services providers
- » Housing Authority of City of Austin
- » Austin Economic Development
- » Waller Creek Local Government Corporation



A CULTURALLY RICH AND DIVERSE PALM DISTRICT...

- Honors the presence and experiences of American Indians, Mexican Americans/Tejanos, Latinos, African Americans, as well as the Chinese, Greek, German, Lebanese, and Jewish immigrants who lived and worked in the District through interpretive projects such as the Texas Historical Commission's Undertold Marker program and builds on Waterloo Greenway cultural programming.
- Preserves and promotes physical cultural resources and architecture.
- Creates welcoming places for Austin's and Central Texas' Mexican American population.
- Incorporate cultural uses in the future plans for Palm School.
- Expands Austin's musical identity as the Live Music Capital of the World by including and promoting local Tejano/Latinx/Spanish-language music and culture and include the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, Palm Park and Palm School, and Brush Square as performance venues during citywide events.
- Creates a sense of identity and place through public art by local artists.
- Utilizes the redevelopment of the Convention Center to create gathering spaces for the local community that foster a sense of belonging.
- Uses the redesign of I-35 to create gateways into Downtown and East Austin that celebrate the District's rich cultural identity and history.
- Engages Huston-Tillotson University, Six Square, and other institutions to identify and preserve remaining historic resources associated with African American history, including the former Freedman community and Black-owned businesses along Sixth Street and Red River Street.
- Enhances the pedestrian life of the district by promoting active, street-level uses such as restaurants and retail, with an emphasis on fostering businesses owned by people of color and locally-owned businesses.
- Preserves performance venues in the Red River Cultural District through incentives, public private partnerships, and regulatory tools such as transfer of development rights, historic and landmark designations, and the Iconic Venue Fund.
- Conserves the history of the District through preservation of historic structures, adaptive reuse of existing structures, and thoughtful integration of historic structures into new development.



- #### CULTURE VISION FRAMEWORK
- ★ Key Opportunities
 - ◀▶ Key Corridors
 - ▭ Palm District
 - Parks
 - Waterways
- #### CULTURE PARTNERS & COORDINATION RESOURCES
- » Austin Convention Center
 - » Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center
 - » George Washington Carver Museum
 - » Huston-Tillotson University
 - » Six Square Cultural District
 - » Red River Cultural District
 - » Mexic-Arte
 - » La Peña
 - » Tejano Trails
 - » Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
 - » Travis County
 - » Downtown Austin Alliance
 - » Preservation Austin
 - » Austin Parks & Recreation
 - » Austin History Center
 - » Austin Economic Development
 - » Visit Austin
 - » Waller Creek Local Government Corporation



A WELL-CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE PALM DISTRICT...

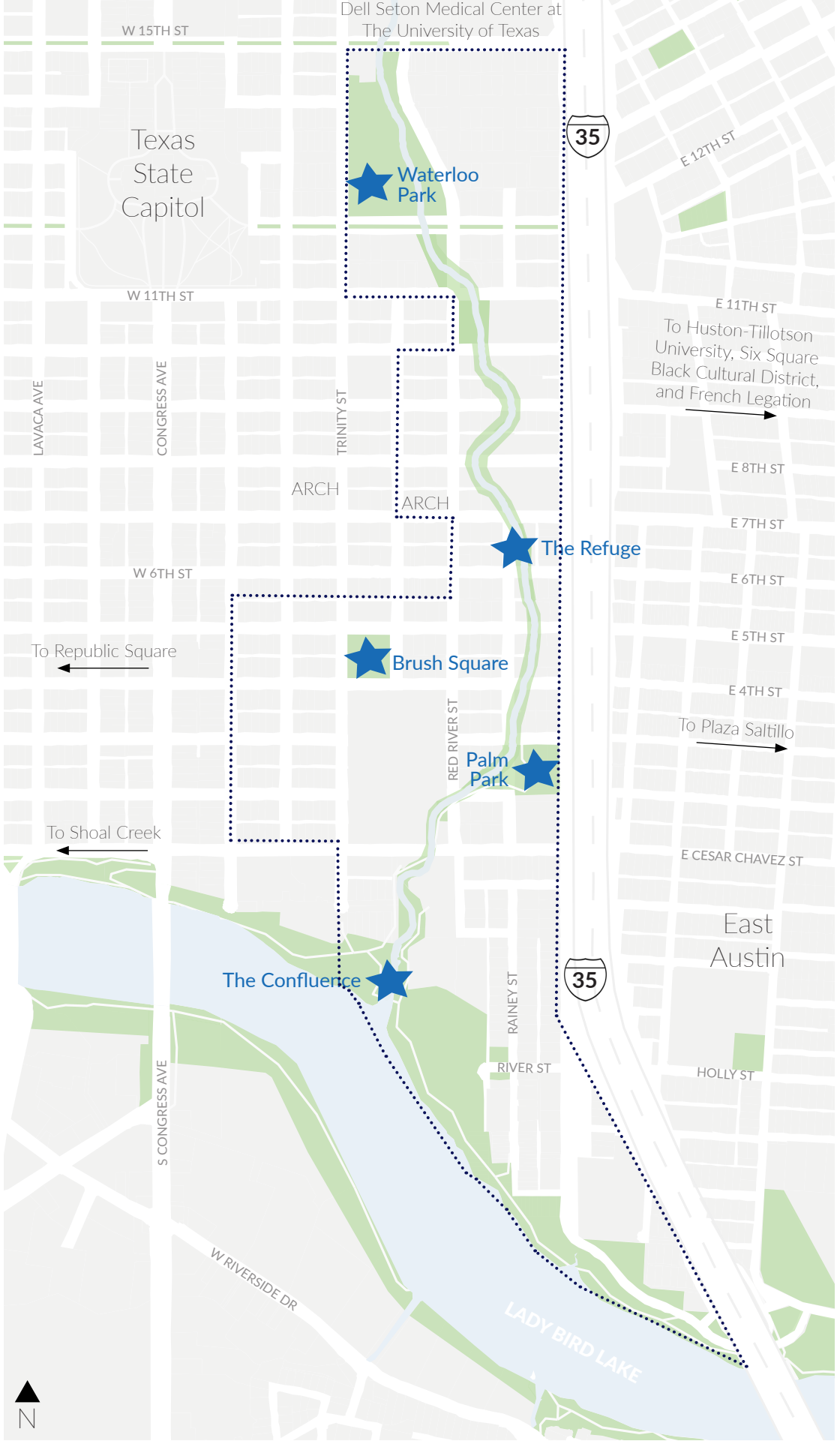
- Leverages the lowering and replacement of I-35 to create better and more attractive connections between East Austin and the District.
- Creates a cohesive and complimentary edge to new, urban-designed boulevards with slower travel speeds that will replace traditional frontage roads that exist along the I-35 corridor today.
- Leverages wider, larger connections at Palm Park, Holly Street, and other key crossings along I-35 to create a seamless connection between downtown, Waterloo Greenway, and East Austin/Salttillo.
- Encourages walking, biking, and public transit and creates accessible pedestrian paths that guide people through the district to all amenities.
- Provides continuity and connectivity from Rainey up to Innovation District.
- Leverages the Waterloo Greenway as a pedestrian pathway (open year round and twenty-four hours a day) linking Lady Bird Lake to Palm School, Palm Park and Waterloo Park.
- Creates a series of signature locations, such as in the Innovation District, Red River Cultural District, and Rainey Street National Historic District, that celebrate these places.
- Increases safety and visibility on pedestrian paths and along connections between amenities such as Butler Trail to Rainey to Cesar Chavez, etc.
- Increases circulation through Waterloo Greenway investments in universally accessible bridges and trail connections.
- Leverages the significant transit investments around the Red, Green, Blue, Expo and Gold lines to foster placemaking like the future transformation of Fourth Street into a central transit-artery and pedestrian centric environment that supports ridership on the future underground rail.
- Creates a more welcoming pedestrian experience in and around the Convention Center by improving the pathways and connections linking it to other parts of the District and to the rest of Downtown.
- Increases sustainability and resilience of utility and infrastructure networks throughout the district by implementing autonomous technologies, supporting expansion of district cooling and the reclaimed water network, supporting stormwater management through engineered and green infrastructure approaches.
- Creates better pedestrian infrastructure and vehicle circulation for Rainey Street and East Sixth Street and connections crossing Cesar Chavez Street.





AN ECOLOGICALLY HEALTHY PALM DISTRICT...

- Serves as a natural recreational area for everyone and a respite to the hardness of the Central Business District.
- Creates an interconnected ribbon of green spaces throughout Downtown connecting the Waterloo Greenway, the Roy and Ann Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail, and the Shoal Creek Trail which facilitates travel through Downtown and beyond.
- Creates a welcoming Palm Park though better lighting and improved amenities to make it more attractive to visitors.
- Improves the Waterloo Greenway, south of Palm Park to the Confluence, through lighting, interpretive signage, and other amenities to invite visitors and residents to explore and experience Waller Creek.
- Enhances ecological function of Waller Creek and Lady Bird Lake.
- Increases tree canopy in the district, specifically along Red River Street and on pedestrian and bicycle pathways.
- Enhances sustainability of the district by using standards of nationally recognized rating systems such as the Sustainable SITES Initiative for site development.
- Promotes the proposed Waterloo Greenway Plan that provides a 1.5-mile park system and 35 acres of connected greenspace.
- Restores natural creek and delta areas including creek bank stabilization, re-planting landscape with new plants and trees, and new east-west connections.
- Connects Palm Park area with the hike & bike trail through creek-level trail.
- Improves public health through quality access to nature, active transportation options, and other healthy community initiatives including Waterloo Greenway programming designed to bring people closer to nature.
- Focuses on native/regional plants that are suited to our climate and resilient, providing a sense of place, educational opportunity, and long-term maintenance benefits.
- Manages stormwater in the District with fine-grained solutions throughout the district that keep our water clean and make the district more resilient to future flooding.



NATURE VISION FRAMEWORK

- ★ Key Opportunities
- ▭ Palm District
- Parks
- Waterways

NATURE PARTNERS & COORDINATION RESOURCES

- » Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
- » Waller Creek Local Government Corporation
- » Austin Parks & Recreation
- » Austin Watershed Protection
- » Austin Public Works
- » Austin Office of Sustainability
- » Trails Foundation

NEXT STEPS

Authorized by City Council resolution no. 20190532, the Palm District Planning Initiative will guide future development in the Eastern portion of Downtown Austin. It will link land use, urban design, transportation, economic development, housing, public spaces, historic preservation, cultural arts, and social equity. Between June and November of 2021, the City of Austin engaged a broad range of community stakeholders to gather their input on the future of the Palm District. Following the collection, review, and analysis of community input, staff identified four vision elements—Inclusive Growth, Culture, Connection, and Nature—and high-level outcomes associated with each element.

As the planning process progresses, the vision elements and outcomes will provide guidance and frame community conversations for more detailed planning. The ongoing process will weave together past planning efforts and integrate contemporary and future-forward ideas to create an amendment to the Downtown Austin Plan, the Palm District Plan. It will acknowledge and reflect the area's diverse and sometimes troubled history and set an equitable path forward for one of Austin's most dynamic places. It will seek to leverage once-in-a-generation projects—the reimagining of I-35 and Project Connect and the expansion of the Downtown Station. It will recognize the cultural significance of Palm School, Palm Park, Rainey Street National Historic Register District, and the Red River Cultural District. It will place these in context with major community investments in the Waller Creek Flood Diversion Tunnel, the Waller Creek Greenbelt, a renewed Waterloo Park, and new and expanded Austin Convention Center. The plan will serve as a guide to create a district welcoming to everybody, resident and visitor, and will be a reflection of the energy and spirit of Austin's past and future.



ACTIVE PLANNING:

- Coordinate with stakeholders
- Analyze future scenarios

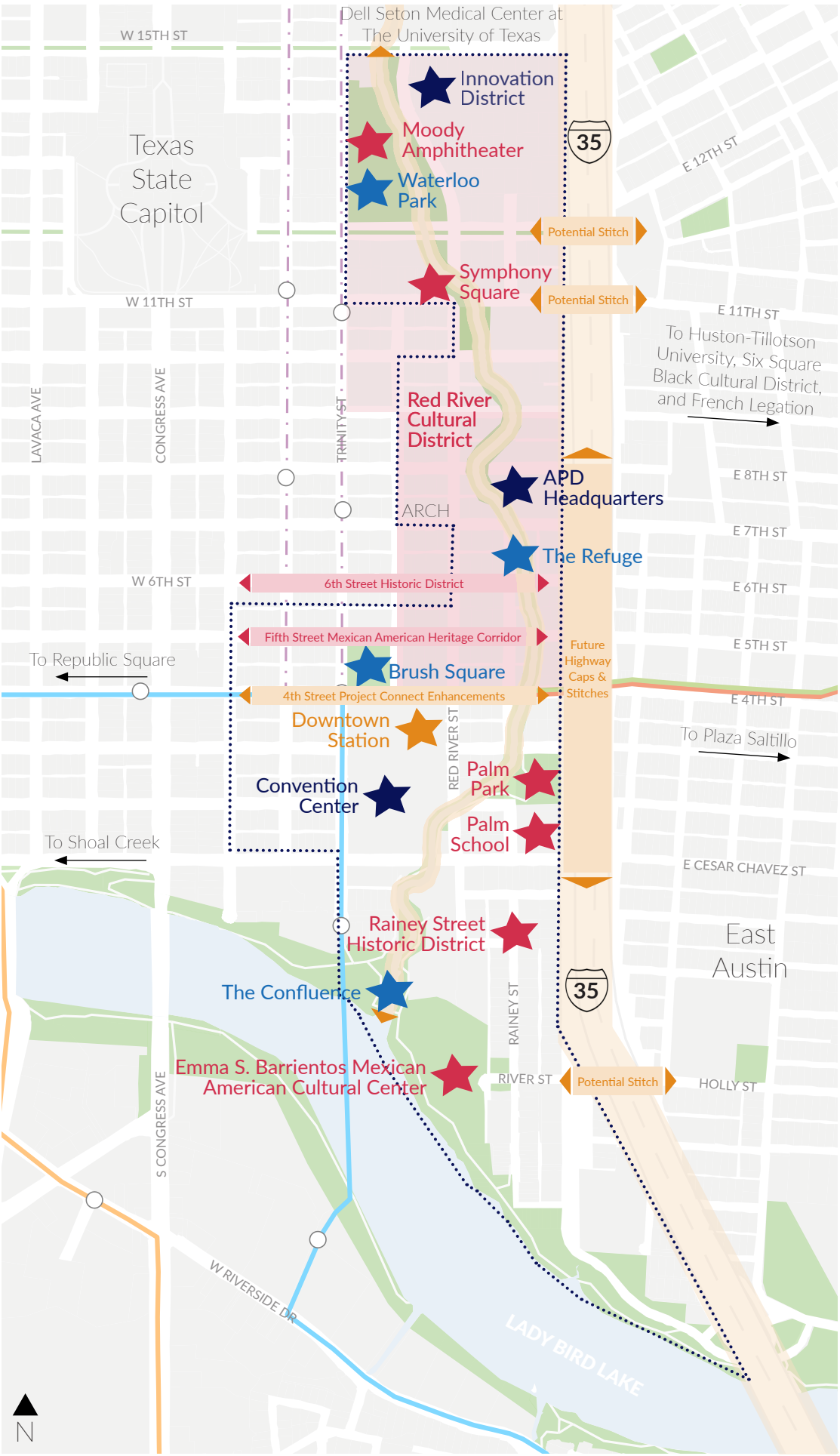


DRAFT REVIEW:

- Present draft plan
- Incorporate feedback

ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION:

- Planning Commission and City Council Hearings
- Amendment to Downtown Austin Plan
- Establish partnerships, regulatory changes, and investments to move toward vision.



VISION ELEMENT
KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- ★ Inclusive Growth
- ★ Culture
- ★ Connection
- ★ Nature

PLANNING AREA

- ▭ Palm District
- ▭ Parks
- ▭ Waterways
- ↔ I-35 Redesign
- Project Connect Light Rail
- Project Connect MetroRail
- Project Connect Transit Stations
- Project Connect MetroRapid (BRT)

The combined map shows points of interests and ongoing projects that are opportunities for coordination to work towards a shared vision for the future of the district.

