

Summary Report

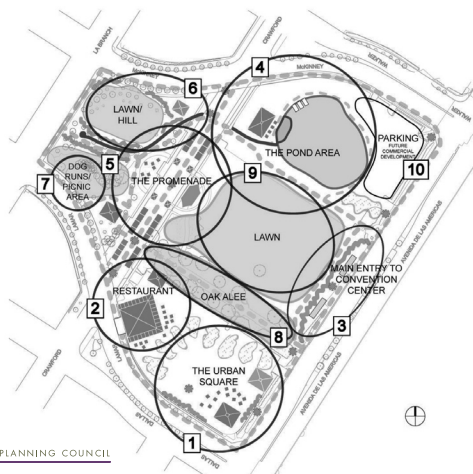
Houston Downtown Report

A short report that summarizes the result of the Placemaking Workshop, working group sessions, and follow-up Visual Concept Plan.

MAJOR DESTINATIONS IN THE PARK – GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

To build up activity in the new Houston Downtown Park, a diverse array of activities that attract different kinds of people needs to be provided. Rather than just one great destination, a number of them are necessary to create a truly lively park. Many of the ideas from the public process translate into the creation of several multi-dimensional destinations that would each attract people and interrelate with each other. These are described briefly below.

1. The Urban Square/SE Corner (across from the Hilton Hotel)
The use of the urban square, at least at the outset, will depend upon a physical and programmatic relationship with the Hilton Hotel, Convention Center, and potentially with the Arena. The concept is park management would work with the managers of these three facilities to develop a constituency for this area of the park. For example, there could be receptions, weddings, etc., in the plaza, the Convention Center could display elements that relate to programs that are occurring inside the building, and the arena could use this and other park spaces such as the lawn for pre-game events and entertainment. A longer term goal is for this area to be viewed and used as a gathering spot for Houstonians. Additionally, wireless Internet access should be provided in the urban square, as well as other areas of the park, if possible.



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Houston Downtown Report (continued)

DESTINATIONS: DETAILED PROGRAM

SE CORNER/THE URBAN SQUARE, 1.3 ACRES – ACROSS FROM HILTON

Workshop observations: Participants felt the greatest potential for this site involved layering of uses to assure that there were reasons for people to use this area of the park. A multi-functional space which is flexible for different needs was stressed, to accommodate small concerts, photography spots, food, and other recreational uses. This area faces both the Hilton Hotel and GRB Convention Center; it therefore should become an area that accommodates many users and provides many points of interest to visitors and residents alike.

The design goal should be to create a space that works for daily programming with substantial amounts of green areas that also can accommodate larger, tented events and parties. The square will have at least one larger open area near to the restaurant big enough to accommodate large receptions (up to 1,500 people). Other areas of the square, including the areas with garden beds, should also be planned so that they can be closed off together with this open space to accommodate even larger private functions.

Garden beds should help soften the square, especially around the restaurant so that diners can enjoy it. Rather than one large garden, the idea is to create a network of paths/plaza space that is broken up by many small garden beds that provide color and shade trees, following the model of a Mexican square. Some of this garden area should be in the shade of the large live oaks and others interspersed with paved areas of the plaza.

A café/newsstand that has interior space but that can expand outside according to the weather is a key anchor of this space. Another key feature should be a gazebo or other area for small scale performances; the Hispanic community and others have indicated that they would use it for mariachi and other musical events. In addition, a bocce court should be provided in a shaded area, along the edge of the Oak Alee, or near the restaurant: it should be close enough to the restaurant, treehouse, or café so that patrons can have a view of the games. The courts should also have space around them for informal observers.