

## After years of delays, construction in sight for areas in Seaholm District, official says

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<http://www.statesman.com/business/after-years-of-delays-construction-in-sight-for-1921958.html>

Two long-awaited projects that developers say will help transform downtown Austin are poised to break ground next year, a city official said Tuesday.

After several years of delays due in part to a recession that dried up financing for development, construction is expected to start on redevelopment projects at the former Seaholm Power Plant and the site of the former Green Water Treatment Plant east of Seaholm, said Fred Evins, the city's project manager overseeing the public-private projects.

"The stars are aligning," Evins said.

The projects will transform the decommissioned plants on downtown's southwestern edge into lively hubs with shops, hotels, condominiums, apartments and other development.

The city hosted an open house for the public on the Seaholm District projects at Austin City Hall on Tuesday.

"I'm thrilled to see it move forward, because this will be a very exciting extension of our downtown into the southwest quadrant," Evins said.

City officials said the projects will put 13 acres of underutilized land back on the tax rolls. The land, along Cesar Chavez Street and stretching from Lamar Boulevard to San Antonio street, is the largest assemblage of city-owned acreage downtown remaining for potential redevelopment.

The five major projects that are planned, coupled with other nearby private development that has sprung up in the past few years, represent about \$2 billion of new investment in what was once a blighted industrial section of downtown.

In addition to the mixed-use projects slated for the Seaholm and Green Water sites, officials are providing updates on Austin's new central library; the former Austin Energy Control Center, where two condominium towers are planned; public art projects destined for the district; bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements; and a planned extension on the Shoal Creek trail, among other projects.

City officials said the redevelopment projects will serve as a model for other developers nationwide to emulate for sustainable urban revitalization. The transit, bike and pedestrian improvements are designed to reduce reliance on automobiles in the area, and buildings and landscaping in the Seaholm District are being planned with high levels of green building and sustainability, city officials say.

On Thursday, the City Council is expected to approve the conceptual design of a new 200,000-square-foot central library in the district and to direct the city manager to proceed with the next design phase. The city is targeting spring 2013 for completion of the design. The timetable calls for construction to start in the summer of 2013, with a grand opening slated for late 2015.

Trammell Crow Co. is the lead developer on the Green Water project, which will bring 1.8 million square feet of development to the 6-acre site.

Evins said the city continues to negotiate a development agreement with Trammell Crow outlining the city's and developer's responsibilities. The city hopes to bring an agreement for the council's consideration in the next several months, Evins said.

Seaholm's lead developer, Austin-based Southwest Strategies Group, plans about 450,000 square feet of development at the 7.8-acre site. The landmark power plant will be renovated to house a special-events center, offices, shops and restaurants.

Southwest Strategies initially hoped to begin work in 2007. A subsequent start date of late 2009 also failed to materialize, as one of the worst recessions in decades wore on.

But now the Seaholm and Green Water projects could break ground in 2012, Evins said. The city is finishing some of its obligations associated with the projects, the apartment market "is very strong," and financing for new apartment construction is becoming more available, Evins said.

Apartments are planned as part of the Green Water redevelopment, Evins said.

Condos had been envisioned for the Seaholm site, but the high-rise will now feature "ground-floor retail with approximately 300 apartment units above," said John Rosato, principal with Southwest Strategies. A hotel is no longer planned as part of the Seaholm site, Rosato said.

In addition, just west of Seaholm, Gables Residential plans to start construction early next year on a second phase of apartments with 222 units, next to its existing 294-unit Gables Park Plaza apartment complex. Gables' second phase also will include about 14,000 square feet of retail space.

"We have a number of developers around town, and downtown, that are striving to be the first to market and catch the next market window," Evins said. "We have a lot of impetus on the developer side, and the city now just about can't move fast enough to get out of their way."

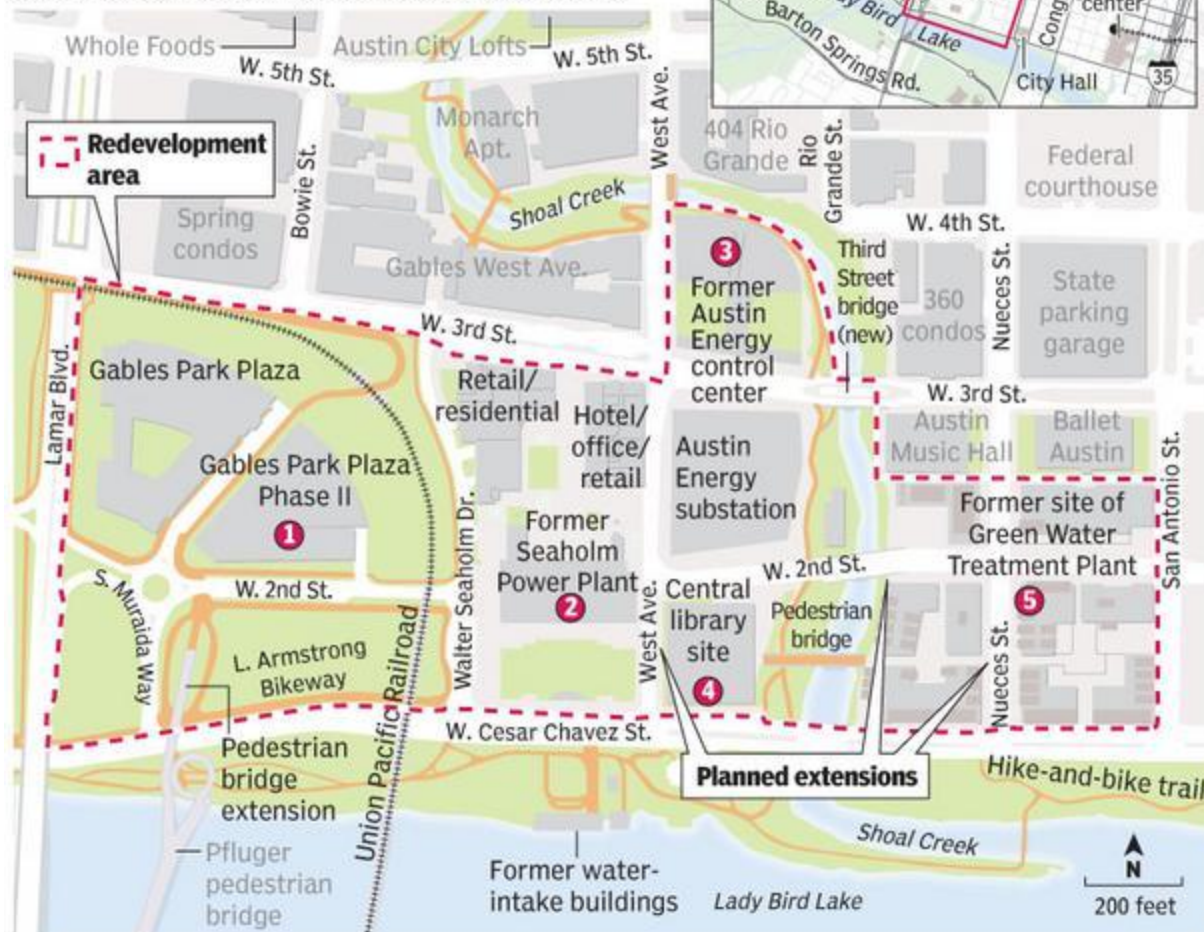
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**Courtesy of JB Goodwin**

[see photos below]

# Seaholm District update

A vibrant urban neighborhood is expected to take shape over the next decade, with plans for residential towers, shops, hotels, entertainment and cultural attractions.



Sources: City of Austin, the developers

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## 1 Gables Park Plaza Phase II

**Status:** Proposed  
**Construction:** 2012  
**Details:** 222 apartments, 14,000 square feet of commercial space

## 2 Seaholm Power Plant redevelopment

**Status:** Design  
**Construction:** 2012 (projected)  
**Details:** About 300 apartments, office, retail, events center, public plazas; about 450,000 square feet

## 3 Energy Control Center redevelopment

**Status:** Master development agreement approved  
**Construction:** Several years out  
**Details:** Residential and retail, about 695,000 square feet

## 4 New central library

**Status:** Design  
**Construction:** 2013 (projected)  
**Details:** 200,000 square feet

## 5 Green Water Treatment Plant redevelopment

**Status:** Master development agreement being negotiated  
**Construction:** 2012 (projected)  
**Details:** Residential, hotel rooms, office, retail; about 1.8 million square feet; includes extension of West Second and Nueces streets through site

