

\$3.4 million Sabine promenade could anchor Waller Creek district

By [Ben Wear](#)

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There's a good chance many longtime Austinites have never been to Sabine Street. After all, only four-plus blocks of the downtown road exist, broken into two out-of-the-way segments near Interstate 35.

The City of Austin aims to change that by transforming the larger piece between East Fourth Street and East Seventh Street into a promenade that, according to a 2010 master plan for the Waller Creek district on downtown's east side, "can become a catalyst for the revitalization of the area."

Although the promenade details remain to be worked out, that master plan for Waller Creek, which meanders just east of this section of Sabine, anticipates that more than 55 feet of the street's existing 80 feet of right of way would be given over to broad sidewalks on each side, with a double row of trees on one side and a single row on the other.

The makeover would be similar to other "great streets" designs the city has done and continues to do elsewhere downtown, but this one would be oriented even more toward those on foot and on bikes.

Cars and trucks would still be allowed, said Jim Robertson, the city's urban design manager, if only because businesses such as the Palm Door events facility would need access for deliveries. But that traffic could be restricted, Robertson said.

Much of the three blocks is lined with one-story buildings and parking lots, labeled in the master plan as "development opportunities."

The city, using a recently awarded \$2.7 million federal grant and \$700,000 approved by Austin voters as part of Proposition 1 in 2010, is about to start the design process for the promenade. Construction could begin within 18 months, Robertson said.

"All we have now is in essence a concept," Robertson said. That concept will be fleshed out through community meetings over the next three to six months, he said a design contractor would be hired after that. "We're not starting from scratch."

Completion of the promenade as early as 2014 would position Sabine as something of a beachhead for what the city hopes will be an effusion of new retail and entertainment development along the downtown length of Waller Creek, after a flood-control tunnel now under construction is completed also in 2014.

Eventually, Robertson said, the city plans to extend the promenade a block south to East Third Street.

Sabine currently ends at East Fourth Street because Waller Creek takes a westward wiggle at that point, leaving room only for what currently is a bedraggled sidewalk.



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Courtesy of JB Goodwin