

## San Pedro Creek Design Overlay District Executive Summary

The San Pedro Creek River Improvement Overlay (RIO 7) is a continuation of the existing RIOs 1 through 6, which were adopted in 2002 to guide private investment along the river and insure a harmonious environment that increased the public's use and appreciation of the River Walk. More recently the city adopted the Downtown Design Guide (DDG) for properties in the 'D' zoning district and created the City of San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines. The DDG applies to properties along the creek that are north of El Paso Street and the historic guidelines apply to properties in the Main and Military Historic District. In 2012, the city began the public-process of creating the Lone Star Community Plan that includes properties along the creek south of El Paso Street.

The Downtown Design Guide and the San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines cover large areas and were written before the San Pedro Creek Improvements Project was initiated so they do not cover how buildings should interact with the linear park along the creek. The Lone Star Community Plan describes a pedestrian oriented, mixed-use commercial area along the creek south of El Paso. The current conventional zoning of the commercial properties covered by the plan does not promote development sympathetic to the community's vision. RIO 7 focuses on the development pattern along the creek in 'D' district north of El Paso Street and promotes a more pedestrian oriented, mixed-use commercial area south of El Paso along and paralleling the creek.

RIO 7 has five character areas 'a' through 'e' which transition from intense uses to residential uses. RIO 7a is the most urban and dense with RIO 7e transitioning to a more natural creek character meandering through single-family neighborhoods.

**Boundaries:** RIO 7 is only applicable to properties adjacent to the creek and/or Cameron St. north of El Paso St. in the 'D' Zoning District; South of El Paso Street, the boundaries extend to the areas between the commercial corridor streets of S. Flores and IH-35.

### RIO 7 goals:

- Create high quality pedestrian connections to San Pedro Creek
- Encourage mixed-use buildings, the reuse and rehabilitation of existing buildings, and the design of new buildings to be compatible with existing, historic structures while encouraging good contemporary design.
- Increase usable open space to provide opportunities for passive recreation and community gathering.
- Orient buildings toward major streets while providing garden facades and entrances along the creek.
- Provide a varied building edge along the creek.
- Create unique, memorable places at the creek and street intersections.

### Differences between RIO 7 and RIOs 1 - 6

RIO's 1 through 6 focus on maintaining, enhancing, and expanding the 1930's Hugman design aesthetic of the downtown River Walk. The character defining features of the downtown River Walk are the local craft traditions of the 1930's, Hugman's idiosyncratic river-landscape, and renovating buildings that were not meant to be seen from the river into pedestrian focused park facades. RIO 7

focuses on the historic, land development pattern along San Pedro Creek, connecting the linear park to surrounding neighborhoods, and expanding publically accessible open space along the creek. RIO 7 assumes that the city's historic district guidelines will serve as the primary guide for developing historic structures and properties in historic districts so it is more focused on new, larger scale construction along the creek.

**Incorporation of City of San Antonio Downtown Design Guides:** In an effort to be consistent with the Downtown Design Guides (DDG) and avoid conflicts amongst applicable city development requirements, RIO 7 incorporates design standards / guidelines set forth by the DDG. RIOs 1 - 6 language for covering the following issues were replaced with DDG guides:

- **Materials:** In place of indigenous, handmade, and traditional building materials (such as stucco and wood) RIO 7 encourages construction to utilize contemporary, durable, and sustainable materials that are compatible with the character of the creek and develop the building's visual identity. High quality, local materials that add scale, texture, and variety at the pedestrian level at still desired.
- **Parking and Parking Garages:** Consistent with the other RIOs, RIO 7 does not allow commercial parking lots within one hundred (100) feet of the creek and limits the amount of creek and primary street frontage used for parking and parking garages within thirty (30) feet of the creek property line. DDG language describing parking garages has been substituted for RIO language. The DDG contemplates new, urban garages as part of larger developments while the RIOs only imagine garages infilled between existing buildings. Pedestrian-oriented public streets and creek-side facades must maintain ground floor activity and should provide clearly defined pedestrian access.
- **Massing and building character:** The height and placement of buildings in RIO's 1 through 6 were developed based on the downtown River Walk and focus on solar access and new construction being compatible with existing buildings. RIO 7 uses setbacks in place of solar access and language from the DDG since it contemplates both larger developments that span an entire block and smaller infill developments between existing buildings. The DDG also has language governing the placement and character of highrise towers that is absent in RIOs 1-6.
- **Midblock connections and Paseos:** Creating more pedestrian connections between surrounding neighborhoods and creek is a major goal of RIO 7. The DDG criteria for mid-block connections and through block paseos is coordinated in RIO 7 to allow additional access points in block over five-hundred fifty (550) feet long.

**Additional Pathways:** RIO 7 requires additional pedestrian pathways in new developments where sites cannot be connected to the low-bank paseo. Over time, this requirement will provide better pedestrian access and connectivity between all of the properties along the creek.

**Building Heights:** Building heights in RIO 7 vary by the underlying zoning district requirements, requirements of the City's Historic Design Guidelines, and goals of the Lone Star Community Plan. Heights by area are:

RIO 7a - Unlimited

RIO 7b – Unlimited, except in the historic district where new buildings must be compatible with historic structures.

RIO 7c - 8 stories

RIO 7d - 4 stories

RIO 7e - 3 stories

**Publicly Accessible Open Spaces:** Because buildings should be expanding and enhancing the linear park, publicly accessible open spaces are required similar to the DDG. Depending on building size, developments must incorporate between 1 and 3 of the following spaces: forecourt, courtyard, paseo, arcade, canopy, or a pedestrian-oriented mid-block service drive and fire lane.

**Adoption Process:** The initial draft of RIO 7 will be sent to the City of San Antonio and proceed through its adoption process. Other agencies, such as the San Pedro Creek Subcommittee, American Institute of Architects (AIA) San Antonio, VIA Metropolitan Transit, and the King William Association will also be provided with the draft for comment.