



Downtown
Redevelopment
Authority

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**DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY RELEASES DESIGNS
FOR NEW SOUTHERN DOWNTOWN PARK**

HOUSTON, TX – The Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DRA) has released design schematics and plans for Southern Downtown Park, a new neighborhood park located on the 1500 block of Fannin Street. Lauren Griffith Associates developed the designs based on a site programming report from Project for Public Spaces (PPS). The programming report outlined recommendations for activities, amenities and events for the park based on public engagement this past summer; proposed features included a lush green environment with lots of shade, sustainable plantings, safe pedestrian and bicycle connections, interactive water features, functional art and on-site food service. Gensler is providing architectural services for the site's fast-casual restaurant, storage building and other structures; Gandy² Lighting Design is

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providing lighting services; Kuo & Associates is providing civil engineering; and Waterscape Consultants is providing water feature engineering.

The L-shaped site will be framed by lush garden zones on the north (bordering Bell Street) and the south (bordering Leeland Street). The northern edge will be anchored by a proposed rotating gateway art installation near the corner of Fannin and Bell, and will also include seating, bike racks and a bike repair station. The southern edge will feature intimate seating with a water feature, along with large- and small-breed dog runs with trees, boulders, mounds and a vine-covered trellis with seating.

The park reimagines the look and use of a traditional backyard with its central lawn, which can be activated with games or serve as a seating area for occasional events held on the elevated trellis platform tucked into the southern gardens.

The lawn will serve as the foreground for the fast-casual cafe, which will offer counter service daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Designed by Gensler, the 2,400-square-foot cafe (with seating for approximately 56) features a gently curving façade reinforcing the organic forms of the site along with a roof monitor where daylight will fill the café and maximize the play of sunlight and shadow; at night it will glow and create a lantern-like landmark. The light-filled café will feature warm, natural materials. A Request for Proposals (RFP) for a café operator will be released in early May and the selected operator will be announced in July 2019.

The exterior of the café features a broad canopy that will offer shade for outdoor dining (with seating for approximately 40) and just beyond, a whimsical play area will provide entertainment for children while their parents dine at the on-site restaurant nearby.

An innovative flexible recreation space adjacent to the restaurant patio, will be used for games such as ping-pong and cornhole along with smaller group activities and events. Walls around the edges can be raised and lowered for special events or climate control, and the eastern wall can serve as a screen for outdoor film screenings or art.

Programming planned for Southern Downtown Park takes a cue from this emerging neighborhood, which has seen an increase of more than 1,500 new residential units since 2012. Quirky, unique events like live music, movies and art will attract the area's prominently young-professional demographic. Flex areas located throughout the park will accommodate small- to medium-sized events for 50 to 150 guests.

Reflecting PPS's recommendation for safe pedestrian connections, the park's distinctive zones will be connected by a broad, curved, Live Oak-lined walkway stretching from the southeast corner to the northwest corner. The site will also be bisected by a second broad walkway directing visitors from mid-block entries on Fannin and Bell toward gathering spaces at the park's center. At night, innovative lighting integrated throughout the park will highlight architectural features and create a stimulating, changeable experience.

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The DRA will bid for a park contractor in December 2019, with a construction start date set for March 2020 and expected opening in March 2021. The official park name will be announced at groundbreaking.

Once occupied by the new park, the space will be managed and programmed by the Downtown District, similar to the operation agreement between the Downtown District and the City of Houston for Market Square Park.

A press kit with park renderings, an aerial site maps and other information is available at bit.ly/2J5hid5.

ABOUT DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DRA) facilitates positive development of the area within the Tax Increment Zone #3 (TIRZ #3) boundaries. Tax increment dollars collected within the boundaries of the Zone are reinvested back into the Zone through the Board of Directors. It accomplishes this by providing financial incentives through public/private sector partnerships designed to make Downtown Houston a place where Houstonians and visitors want to live, work and play. For more information, visit downtowntirz.com.

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