

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Fiesta Gardens
Other name/site number: NA
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 2101 Jesse E. Segovia St.
City or town: Austin State: Texas County: Travis
Not for publication: [] Vicinity: [] N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
([x] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my
opinion, the property ([x] meets [] does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
[] national [] statewide [x] local

Applicable National Register Criteria: [x] A [] B [] C [] D

Signature of certifying official: Mark Wolfe
Title: State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 2/20/19
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[] entered in the National Register
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[] removed from the National Register
[] other, explain:

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	Building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	Buildings
1	0	Sites
3	4	Structures
1	0	Objects
7	6	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Commerce: business, restaurant; Recreation and Culture/music facility, sports facility

Current Functions: Recreation and Culture/music facility; Social/meeting hall; Government/government office; Other: festival venue

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th and 20th century revivals: Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Principal Exterior Materials: Concrete (CMU), stucco, brick, wood.

Narrative Description (see pages 7-10)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations: G

Areas of Significance: Community Planning and Development; Entertainment and Recreation; Social History.

Period of Significance: 1965-1974

Significant Dates: 1965, 1966, 1967, 1974

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: William C. Holmans (Architect); Clifton O. Smith Jr. and Fritz Von Osthoff (Landscape Architects)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see pages 11-23)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see pages 24-28)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (Texas Historical Commission, Austin)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Austin History Center

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approx. 28.3 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (see page 29)

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

Verbal Boundary Description: The Fiesta Gardens event and entertainment complex is located at 2101 Jesse E. Segovia St. in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas. The Travis County Appraisal District database lists the property ID number as 282818; the legal description is given as "Sand Beach Reserve Block 5-6 and Riverview Gardens," located on Nash Hernandez Sr. Road. The nominated parcel excludes a triangular (approx. 0.13-acre) portion of the legal parcel northeast of Robert T. Martinez Street, which contains a portion of a non-historic building.

Boundary Justification: The nomination includes all property historically associated with the district and includes all but a small portion of the legal parcel.

11. Form Prepared By (with assistance from NR Coordinator Gregory Smith)

Name/title: Kristen Hotopp

Organization: Student, MS Historic Preservation Program, School of Architecture, The University of Texas at Austin, on behalf of the City of Austin

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Date: August 6, 2018

12. Additional Documentation

Maps (see pages 29-38)

Additional items (see pages 39-58)

Photographs (see pages 5-6 and 59-73)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington D.C.

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Photo Log

All current photos by Kristen Hotopp (2019) except as noted.

Photo 1

North exterior façade and entrance on Jesse E. Segovia St.

Photo 2

North exterior façade and entrance on Jesse E. Segovia St.

Photo 3

North exterior stone gate (staff office entrance) on Jesse E. Segovia St. (2017)

Photo 4

Dining and Concession Hall interior, facing east.

Photo 5

Dining and Concession Hall interior, wooden ceiling beams with diamond detail.

Photo 6

Dining and Concession Hall interior oblique, facing southwest. (2017)

Photo 7

South exterior Dining and Concession Hall façade and outdoor patio. (2017)

Photo 8

South exterior Dining and Concession Hall façade detail.

Photo 9

Eastern edge of the lagoon trail overlooking small boat dock, facing south. Dock is noncontributing.

Photo 10

Patio with circular and square planters and stage, facing southwest.

Photo 11

Dining and Concession Hall south exterior façade facing northeast.

Photo 12

Covered stage, facing south.

Photo 13

Planters at interior patio gate, facing north.

Photo 14

Spectator grandstand staircase, facing south.

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Photo 15

Spectator grandstand, facing northwest.

Photo 16

Spectator grandstand, facing southeast over lagoon. Photographed by Gregory Smith (2017).

Photo 17

“Mexican Market” south exterior façade, east wing with gated entryway.

Photo 18

“Mexican Market” south exterior façade with detailed gated entryway and rear patio, facing northeast.

Photo 19

“Mexican Market” south-facing interior courtyard wall with detailed gated entryway.

Photo 20

“Mexican Market” view from arcaded portico overlooking garden courtyard, facing southeast. (2017)

Photo 21

“Mexican Market” arcaded portico and interior garden courtyard, facing southeast. (2017)

Photo 22

“Mexican Market” arcaded portico, facing west.

Photo 23

“Mexican Market” gated exterior wall (staff office entrance) overlooking interior courtyard, facing south.

Photo 24

“Mexican Market” north-facing interior garden courtyard with central fountain. (2017)

Photo 25

“Mexican Market” interior garden courtyard, facing north. (2017)

Photo 26

Johnny Delgado Outdoor Pavilion, facing southeast - Noncontributing. Photographed by Gregory Smith (2019)

Photo 27

Restroom building, facing east. – Noncontributing. Photographed by Gregory Smith (2019)

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Description

Fiesta Gardens is a faux Mexican-themed event and entertainment complex in Central East Austin on the northeast shore of Lady Bird Lake. The complex borders the southern edge of a working-class Mexican-American residential neighborhood located directly north of the site. Designed by architect William C. Holmans, and constructed in 1965-1966, the complex features a mid-century modernist interpretation of the Spanish Colonial-Pueblo Revival architectural aesthetic.¹ Fiesta Gardens' principal contributing resources include a 5000-square-foot concession building and dining hall, a one-story rectangular building with a flat roof; an enclosed outdoor patio with decorative, circular and square concrete planters; an open stage facing a stage bordered by a courtyard featuring a circular fountain; a spectator stand with seating for 1000 facing Lady Bird Lake to the south; an enclosed garden courtyard (once covered by a clear, convertible gabled roof) flanked by two building wings with covered porticoes that originally served as shopping stalls for the center's "Mercado de México;" and a 400 by 1200 foot man-made lagoon connected to Lady Bird Lake.² City of Austin Superintendent of Parks Landscape Architect Clifton O. Smith Jr. designed the botanical gardens and the scenic hiking trail encircling the lagoon;³ the gardens and hiking trail were also installed in 1965-1966. After the City of Austin purchased the site in 1967, Fiesta Gardens' site boundaries expanded to include an outdoor pavilion and additional park grounds for large concerts and outdoor events. Today, Fiesta Gardens still functions as an event and entertainment complex, but now also provides offices for City of Austin employees and serves as a city maintenance equipment depot. With the exception of a few small additions and modifications, and site boundary expansions incorporating a new outdoor pavilion, parklands, and parking lot, Fiesta Gardens' site plan, exterior façade, and contributing resources remain largely unchanged and intact, though the lagoon trail has eroded over the years to such great extent that now only the portion adjacent to the original complex site still exists.

The Fiesta Gardens lakeside event and entertainment complex is located at 2101 Jesse E. Segovia St., formerly known as Bergman Avenue, in Austin, Travis County, Texas. The Travis County Appraisal District's database lists the property ID number as 282818; the legal description is given as "Sand Beach Reserve Block 5-6 and Riverview Gardens," located on Nash Hernandez Sr. Road. Located on the northern shores of a lagoon connected to Lady Bird Lake, the property borders a once residential working-class Mexican-American residential enclave on the northern perimeter, serving as a transition zone between the neighborhood and adjacent parkland. The buildings and planters at Fiesta Gardens are constructed of concrete masonry units (CMUs) with a textured stucco surface treatment lending an adobe-like appearance; originally painted a cinnamon color, they are now painted in a bright gold hue. The Fiesta Gardens complex retains a high degree of integrity: it remains in its original location and setting, and the principal structures and features, and much of the original landscape, remains intact. Excepting the lagoon trail, which has eroded over the years, and the conversion of the Mercado de México to office space, the complex is still fully functional as originally conceived and designed, though Fiesta Gardens' age is evident through visible wear and disrepair.

Fiesta Gardens' Built Features

Main Entrance

Visitors to Fiesta Gardens enter the complex through an understated north-facing doorway on Jesse E. Segovia St. A six-foot wooden fence envelops the main compound; were it not for a small sign posted on the nearby fence, and the poured concrete path, lined by a manicured lawn and indicating an entryway, Fiesta Gardens' main entrance on the

¹ Fiesta Gardens. Austin Parks and Recreation Site Development Plan, 1960; "Fiesta Gardens to Bloom." *The Austin Statesman* (1914-1973), March 20, 1966.

² "Fiesta Gardens to Lure Tourists This Spring: Fun and Flora." *Austin in Action*, April 1966, p. 39.

³ Fiesta Gardens. Austin Parks and Recreation Site Development Plan, 1960.

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north side of the concession building might be easily overlooked. Gated wooden fencing and intermittent parallel parking spaces resembling driveways front an otherwise non-descript streetscape. The main building's cheery, yet modest front façade and veiled outward appearance conceals a colorful, engaging interior oriented towards the complex's inner courtyard, which overlooks Lady Bird Lake to the south. The main entryway leads to Fiesta Gardens' concession building and dining hall, through which visitors access the interior patio courtyard.

Concession Building and Dining Hall (contributing building)

The 5,000-square-foot concession building and dining hall facing Jesse E. Segovia St. is the principal building at Fiesta Gardens and serves as the primary public entrance to the complex via a landscaped path leading to the front door. Constructed of concrete masonry units (CMU) covered with textured stucco for an adobe-like appearance and painted in a bright gold hue consistent with the complex's design scheme, the hall is a 1-story rectangular building with a flat roof and square windows punctuating the façade (six windows on the north and south sides of the building, and four windows on the west and east sides, respectively). The window exteriors are offset with decorative wooden shutters painted in a bright, contrasting orange, as are other decorative detailing elements, including a simple linear band and faux projecting timbers on the upper portion of the building's exterior, as well as a cornice atop the building.

The concession building interior features a plain, yet spacious open floor plan accented with exposed wooden ceiling beams and load-bearing columns. The highly textured horizontal ceiling beams feature decorative diamond-shaped carvings, while the vertical columns feature triangular carvings at the top and bottoms that offset and provide warmth to the otherwise unadorned, open interior. A matching wooden-frame concession stand, equipped with a sink, refrigerator, and ample countertop space, sits on the north side of the hall, next to the building entryway. A south-facing exterior door leads to the outdoor patio, and a west-facing door leads to the outdoor fountain courtyard.

Outdoor Patio (contributing site)

The outdoor patio just outside the concession building's south façade alternates between a smooth and pebbled concrete surface, intermittently accented with circular and square garden planters that employ the complex's textured gold stucco surface treatment accented by a dark red brick border. A concrete path leads east to the eastern lagoon trail, which now stops short down a flight of concrete steps at the edge of the lagoon due to erosion. A short concrete/stucco boundary wall topped with dark red brick demarcates the patio edge, separating the patio from the lagoon trail and lake area, though in a few spots, the boundary wall is made of basic concrete. Just behind the perimeter, palm trees and native plants (Crepe Myrtles, Ferns, Purple Heart Spiderwort, Mountain Laurel, etc.), part of the original landscape design, stand at the southern patio boundary overlooking the lake.

Stage (contributing structure)

A wooden pavilion reminiscent of the concession building's interior woodwork covers the raised concrete slab on which the stage sits. The slab exterior is painted gold in keeping with Fiesta Gardens' other structural features.

Courtyard Fountain (contributing object)

A large circular courtyard fountain, which can be accessed by the western concession hall door, sits in the center of an adjacent outdoor patio to the west of the main patio and stage. The fountain was constructed with the same CMU, stucco, and brick materials and painted gold consistent with the complex's exterior design scheme. The fountain is no longer in use, but it remains an aesthetic feature of the landscape. A low boundary wall, built of stucco and concrete, and topped with dark red brick, borders the courtyard, now serving as a planter for palm trees and native plants. The

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planter border is cracked and broken in a few areas and some deterioration is evident. A wooden fence encloses the north side of the space and can be opened to enable access for large vehicles and or groups.

Spectator Grandstand (contributing structure)

The covered spectator grandstand, which seats 1000 and faces the lagoon, sits at the south side of the fountain courtyard. The stand is the only structure within the complex that does not employ the prevailing textured gold stucco and dark red brick design scheme. Accessing the stand requires hopping over the concrete boundary wall and scaling down the hill close to the bank of the lagoon to ascend the grandstand steps leading to the stand. Once there, however, visitors enjoy picturesque views of the lagoon, Lady Bird Lake, and the adjacent Lady Bird Hike and Bike Trail. At some events, visitors can relive Fiesta Gardens' glory days as a premier water skiing entertainment facility with water-based performances in the lagoon.

Man-made Lagoon (contributing structure)

Originally a gravel quarry, Fiesta Gardens' man-made lagoon sits in between the main Fiesta Gardens building complex and Lady Bird Lake. The lagoon facilitated boat transport to the site from downtown hotels, as well as lakeside boat tours. More importantly, however, the lagoon provided a stage for popular contemporary "show-skiing" performances on the water for spectators seated in the grandstand. To create the lagoon, developers dredged the quarry below lake grade and breached the quarry boundary, connecting the quarry to Lady Bird Lake and filling it with water (a comparison of 1955 and 1965 USGS topographical maps indicate that the lagoon boundary corresponds exactly with that of the old quarry). The lagoon was originally encircled by a hiking trail that included several scenic overlooks; though the trail has since eroded, the lagoon's scenic lakeside vistas remain one of Fiesta Gardens' biggest visitor attractions. A long, thin non-contributing boat dock sits on the water at the lagoon's eastern edge.

"Mercado de México" Market Building with Small Fountain Garden Courtyard Interior (contributing building)

The Market building was designed to function as two parallel wings that opened into a (now open-air) courtyard that was once covered by a clear and retractable gabled roof which controlled climate and humidity. Each vendor stall within the market originally faced the courtyard. Though the old market building, which sits just south of the main patio, stage, and fountain courtyard, now serves as office and equipment storage space for the city, the building and courtyard nevertheless retains much of their original charm. The façade features two arched window insets (now covered) on the south exterior of each wing. The textured, gold concrete-stucco exterior is detailed with the same contrasting dark red brick border punctuating the rectangular 1-story building wings that flank the small garden courtyard. Additionally, projecting timbers protrude in between a contrasting orange cornice and decorative band, evoking historic southwest architectural forms. The arched windows, arcaded portico entryways, and arched exterior gateways, adorned with decoratively placed, yet plain dark red brick borders, juxtapose against the rectilinear building. A concrete path leads west across a wooden truss bridge to the western and newer portion of the property; the path forks just west of the bridge, one piece hugging the lagoon to the east, the other leading to the new pavilion and pavilion grounds. The trail hugging the lagoon has cracked and buckled in numerous places due to heavy erosion.

The market building interior and courtyard are accessed via a single arched iron gate to the north and a double gate to the south. The northern gateway consists of a pebbled stone arch and single iron gate painted with a bright orange accent color, flanked by a wooden privacy fence that encloses the space. The double gate to the south incorporates a concrete-stucco arch and supporting stucco walls framed with a dark red brick border that transforms from a single layer to a wide two-foot band above the arch. The top of the arch features a decorative strip of diagonally placed dark red brick that adds visual texture, contrasting with the smooth, wide brick band beneath it. Inside the courtyard, a small concrete fountain sits in the center of a garden flanked by two building wings with arched portico entrances. Once

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open air, the wings have since been enclosed and are now used as office space, though the portico space in front of each unit is still intact.

Fiesta Gardens' Non-contributing Built Features

Fiesta Gardens' non-contributing features were built after the period of significance ended in 1974. Non-contributing features at Fiesta Gardens include the Johnny Degollado Outdoor Pavilion at the west end of the property, an outdoor restroom facility adjacent to the pavilion, a municipal maintenance equipment shed just west of the Mexican Market, a boat dock sitting atop the lagoon, and three portable boat storage sheds at the property's eastern perimeter.

Property Inventory

Feature	Type	Number	Date	C/NC
Concession Building and Dining Hall	Building	1	1966	C
Outdoor Patio	Site	2	1966	C
Stage	Structure	3	1966	C
Courtyard Fountain	Object	4	1966	C
Spectator Grandstand	Structure	5	1966	C
Man-made Lagoon	Structure	6	Breeched and filled c. 1962 ⁴	C
Mexican Market	Building	7	1966	C
Outdoor Pavilion	Structure	8	2003-04	NC
Restroom Facility	Building	9	After 1974	NC
City Maintenance Shed	Building	10	After 1974	NC
Boat Dock	Structure	11	2016	NC
Three Boat Storage Shipping Containers (counted as one structure)	Structure	12	2002	NC

⁴⁴ The *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report* published in 1974 states that the lagoon first appeared on aerial photographs in 1962. Davidson, Dan M. for Austin City Council. *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report* (May 29, 1974), p. 1).

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Statement of Significance

Opened in 1966, Fiesta Gardens in Austin, Texas, is a faux Mexican-themed event and entertainment complex in Central East Austin on the northeast shore of Lady Bird Lake. Designed by architect William C. Holmans,⁵ Fiesta Gardens was constructed by Austin Aquatic Gardens, a syndicate funded by the Perkins Group, a coalition of local and regional investors led by businessman and Austin Chamber of Commerce staffer, Tom Perkins, and Ed St. John, former Austin Chamber of Commerce President and Austin Aqua Festival Commodore.⁶ Conceived in 1960 as an interregional tourist attraction on par with Alabama's Bellingrath Gardens and Florida's Cypress Gardens, both of which featured show-skiing entertainment, Fiesta Gardens opened to the public in May of 1966 after hosting the annual Texas Medical Association convention that April.⁷ The functionally related complex consisted of several principal buildings, a meticulously designed botanical landscape of tropical, flowering, and native vegetation; fountains; a man-made lagoon and accompanying 25-seat excursion boat dubbed the "Chaparral;" a hiking trail with scenic overlooks; and a spectator stand overlooking the lagoon.⁸ As a private venture operating on public land, the project was controversial from the start. Nor was Fiesta Gardens as profitable as bullish Perkins Group forecasts had initially predicted, leading the City of Austin to purchase the Perkins Group lease in December 1967 after a City Council vote to recapture the site for public benefit.⁹ Despite its unprofitability, Fiesta Gardens served as a popular water-based entertainment, event, and shopping center for tourists from the time of its opening, catering to Anglo visitors in the early days and later expanding, under the city's ownership, to serve as home base for the city's annual Austin Aqua Festival, Austin Boat Club races, and other civic and community events.¹⁰ The complex has been in continuous operation since 1966, and while it no longer serves as a tourist venue, it is still utilized as an event space, hosting large music festivals as well as smaller community-based events.

The Fiesta Gardens district is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A (local level) in the areas of Community Planning and Development, Social History, and Entertainment and Recreation. With respect to Community Planning and Development, the Fiesta Gardens project was pivotal in shaping the development of the northern shore of the then newly created Lady Bird Lake (known contemporaneously as Town Lake) east of Interstate Highway 35, beginning with the construction of the Longhorn Dam in 1960.¹¹ Fiesta Gardens is also significant in the context of the city's community planning and development history as a (failed) public-private venture experiment and the first Austin City Council's public site repurchase (in 1967) involving development on Lady Bird Lake. Fiesta Gardens is further significant in the context of Social History and Entertainment and Recreation as an "exotic" entertainment venue and tourist attraction that, though based in a Mexican-American residential enclave, catered primarily to Anglo patrons during the Civil Rights era, with a design and programming that relied on only vague references to (as well as outright stereotypes of) authentic Mexican culture.

⁵ Fiesta Gardens. Austin Parks and Recreation Site Development Plan, 1960; "Fiesta Gardens to Bloom." *The Austin Statesman* (1914-1973), March 20, 1966.

⁶ "Fiesta Gardens to Bloom." *The Austin Statesman* (1914-1973), March 20, 1966.

⁷ "Fiesta Gardens." (Press release) April 5, 1966; "Fiesta Gardens to Lure Tourists This Spring: Fun And Flora." *Austin in Action*, April 1966, p. 39; "Famed Cypress Gardens founder made his own splash on skis." Joy Wallace Dickinson. *Orlando Sentinel*. August 2, 2015; "Fiesta Gardens to Bloom." *The Austin Statesman* (1914-1973), March 20, 1966.

⁸ Fiesta Gardens brochure. *Fiesta Gardens*. Austin, Texas: April 5, 1966. Austin History Center; Fiesta Gardens. Austin Parks and Recreation Site Development Plan, 1960.

⁹ "Budget Still Ailing: City Receives First Payments From Medicare, Fiesta Gardens"; "City Purchases Fiesta Gardens." Glen Castlebury, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973); Austin, Texas. December 8, 1967: A40.

¹⁰ "City Plans to Operate Fiesta Gardens." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), Jun 26, 1968.

¹¹ "Austin's Town Lake: It Mirrors Peace and Profit, Serenity and Shouting." Glen Castlebury, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973); Austin, Texas. March 20, 1966; "Town Lake, Austin Texas: Overland Use Plan." *The Texas Architect* 14, no. 1 (January-February 1964): 13.

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Fiesta Gardens' role in promoting and popularizing botanical tourism and show-ski entertainment in Austin is also important, as both were popular mid-century leisure activities.¹² Motorized speedboats, and related water sports, had become popular forms of recreation nationally by the early 1960s. Perkins Group Vice President, Tom Perkins, aimed to capitalize on the phenomenon at Fiesta Gardens, noting in 1966 that, "The fastest growing sport in America today is water skiing."¹³ In the decade that followed, other entrepreneurs, such as the North American Ski Lift Corporation, proposed similar water-based entertainment ventures on the lake's northeastern shore, pointing to ongoing interest in water-based recreation and performance throughout the 1970s.¹⁴ Fiesta Gardens maintained its significance as an entertainment and recreational venue even after it was purchased by the City of Austin in 1967, as a center of Austin's cultural and recreational life featuring major city-sponsored events, such as Austin Aqua Fest, through the early 1980s. For the purposes of this nomination, however, the period of significance begins with the initial construction in 1965 and extends to 1974, when the city's facility expansion and related area land acquisition efforts ceased due to community opposition and intervention. The property meets Criteria Consideration G because it is exceptionally significant for its association with community organizing efforts by the Austin Hispanic community to prevent displacement of East Austin residents for facility expansion through the early 1970s.

In the early 20th century, civil unrest in Mexico (culminating in the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s) led to steady migration to Texas, including Austin. In 1910, the Hispanic population of Austin was only 1.7% of the total, but by 1930 the census reported that 10,225 Latino residents (13% of Austin's population), and by 1990 the Latino population was 121,689 (21% of total). In the late 19th century, the primary Latino neighborhood in the city was just west of the city center, between Congress and Rio Grande, and West 4th and the Colorado River. The first quarter of the 20th century, however, marked a period of transition for east Austin, which had emerged from the 19th century as a rather diverse place of settlement for incoming European immigrants, as well as Latinos and African Americans. By 1910 east Austin property values were notably below those of other neighborhoods, and a Mexican-American community began to coalesce there.¹⁵ In 1916 the Austin School Board established the Comal School at Third and Chicon streets for Mexican American children. The First Mexican Baptist Church was erected at 301 East Avenue in 1920 and the congregation of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church was moved from the city center to 995 Lydia in 1927. A Mexican American market was also regularly held near 7th and Red River. Overall, East Austin offered less expensive land and a greater degree of stability due to less impact from industrial growth. By 1924 one third of all Latino families in Travis County were reported to be in east Austin and by 1930 all Mexican American churches were located east of East Avenue (currently IH-35). Koch and Fowler's 1928 *Austin City Municipal Plan* sought to solidify segregation by concentrating primarily African American and Tejano residents in East Austin through selective restriction of utility services in other parts of the city. As the plan was implemented, housing, utilities, civic infrastructure and other related services were denied to African Americans and Latinos outside the established borders of East Austin, Wheatville and Clarksville. In 1931 legal sanctioning of high intensity commercial and industrial zoning in East Austin further fractured residential improvements. The segregation of Austin neighborhoods intensified through the 1960s, coinciding with the postwar development along the shores of the Colorado River.

¹² National Show Ski Association: <http://www.usawaterski.org/pages/divisions/showski/main.asp>; Cypress Gardens. National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places. April 14, 2014.

¹³ "Fiesta Gardens to Lure Tourists This Spring: Fun And Flora." *Austin in Action*, April 1966, p. 39.

¹⁴ *Water Ski Lift and Concession Project*. Proposal prepared by the North American Ski Lift Corporation for the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and Austin City Council, June 1978; Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. June 29, 1978; Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. October 12, 1978.

¹⁵ Greenhill, Sharon Edgar. *Impact of Central City Revitalization on East Austin—Austin, Texas*. 1980: Austin, The University of Texas. P. 12.

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Postwar Town Lake Development and the Planning of Fiesta Gardens

The redevelopment of the Colorado River into Lady Bird Lake (then known as Town Lake) in 1960 transformed the cultural and architectural landscape of the City of Austin. Inspired by similar public works projects of the era, the construction of Tom Miller Dam in the 1930s helped to control Colorado River flooding west of the city and provided a reservoir with which to harness electrical power.¹⁶ Austin's Seaholm Power Plant eventually proved insufficient to power the growing municipality, and in the mid-1950s the city began searching for a site to accommodate a larger power facility. A limestone shelf outcropping on the river bend at Pleasant Valley Road in east Austin, a former Colorado River cattle crossing on the 1850s Chisholm Cattle Trail, was identified and secured for the construction of a new, aptly named Longhorn Crossing Dam. Longhorn Crossing Dam, begun in 1959 and completed in 1960, reshaped the meandering Colorado River east of downtown, creating a larger reservoir for the forthcoming Holly Power Plant and the six-mile waterway that is now known as Lady Bird Lake.¹⁷

The construction of the waterfront Fiesta Gardens complex in the mid to late 1960s helps to illustrate the evolution of the physical and cultural landscapes that developed alongside the creation of Town Lake east of Interstate Highway 35, in what was then a predominantly working-class, Mexican-American community. East Sand Beach Reserve, the lakefront district adjacent to Fiesta Gardens, was deeded to Austin by the State of Texas in July of 1945.¹⁸ Over the many years prior to redevelopment, the Stroberg Tract, the site at the base of Chicon St. east of Festival Beach, had served as a Chisholm Cattle Trail crossing, a possible campsite for Tonkawa Native Americans, and an industrial gravel pit before the establishment of Fiesta Gardens in 1966.¹⁹ The gravel pit was originally owned by Travis Materials and, once abandoned, purchased circa 1960 by the City of Austin with Public Works funds from the Electrical Department. The Fiesta Gardens lagoon, which first appeared on aerial photographs in 1962,²⁰ was formed when the gravel pit, and a channel connecting the pit to the lake, were dredged and inundated by lake water.²¹

Recognizing the new waterfront's lucrative potential, the Austin Chamber of Commerce was heavily involved in promoting the public bond measure that financed Longhorn Crossing Dam, as well as planning and development of the lakefront. In 1961, Austin City Council formed a Town Lake Study Committee (TLSC), the "brainchild"²² of the Chamber of Commerce. Initially charged with overseeing and guiding development on the city's public land, the committee consisted of two representatives from the Chamber, two representatives from the city's Parks and Recreation department, and two members from the city's Planning Commission. Chamber of Commerce staffers Ed St. John and Tom Perkins, who launched plans for Fiesta Gardens in 1960 before the TLSC was officially formalized, were named to the committee, later eliciting conflict of interest charges when their Fiesta Gardens project proposal aired publicly. Relegated to the review of private projects in 1966 (after the Fiesta Gardens contract was approved) and disbanded by Austin City Council in February 1966, the committee was controversial from the start.²³ Some opposed the formation of TLSC, preferring the Parks Board to oversee lakefront development to ensure that all public lands remained open to the public. Contemporary news reports stated of the committee that, "its origin, makeup, and its role

¹⁶ "Austin's Town Lake: It Mirrors Peace and Profit, Serenity and Shouting."

Glen Castlebury, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973); Austin, Texas. March 20, 1966.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ City of Austin, Office of the City Manager. *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report*, p. 1. By Dan M. Davidson for Austin City Council. Austin, Texas: May 29, 1974.

¹⁹ "Fiesta Gardens." (Press release) April 5, 1966.

²⁰ City of Austin, Office of the City Manager. *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report*, p. 1. By Dan M. Davidson for Austin City Council. Austin, Texas: May 29, 1974.

²¹ Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. May 26, 1967.

²² "Waters Rough From Start." Glen Castlebury, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973); Austin, Texas. March 20, 1966.

²³ *Ibid.*

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were questionable (particularly because) the committee was not initially consulted²⁴ about the Fiesta Gardens contract, arguably the biggest development project on public land during the committee's tenure.

Perkins Group investment principals had conceived of Fiesta Gardens as the first private venture on public land before the waters of the Colorado River ever filled Town Lake, however. The Gardens Group syndicate initially approached the Austin City Council in 1962 to propose what was then named the "Austin Aquatic Gardens" plan for the Stroberg Tract.²⁵ In January 1963, two TLSC members who were also Gardens Group incorporators, Tom Perkins, a paid Chamber of Commerce staffer and Ed St. John, a Chamber of Commerce staffer and advertising executive, pitched the proposal to the entire TLSC. The TLSC rejected the proposal on the grounds that the Perkins Group hadn't provided enough information to demonstrate that the plan was compatible with overall Town Lake development. Moreover, the proposed public-private partnership was immediately criticized as a conflict of interest boondoggle, and the outcry over Perkins' financial ties to the project led him to resign. City Council then appointed Perkins' boss, Chamber of Commerce manager Vic Mathias, as his TLSC successor.²⁶

Despite the scandal, Perkins and former fellow TLSC committee member, ad agency executive Warren Beaman, pursued their proposal to lease the city's 20-acre Stroberg Tract for the Austin Aquatic Gardens venture. Appealing directly to the Austin City Council in March 1963, the Perkins Group was awarded the requested lease and concession contract via Council's unanimous vote of support for the development of lakeside botanical gardens and an amusement park at Fiesta Gardens.^{27 28} The 1963 contract included a 50-year lease and required the Gardens Group to put at least \$100,000 in improvements into the site (at the time, promoters committed to investing \$250,000 to develop the Gardens). Citing strong revenue projections,²⁹ the contract stipulated limited returns to the City in the early stages, with payment of \$100 in monthly rent plus 2.4% of the concessions gross and 8% of admissions fees.³⁰ Anticipating future expansion, in October of 1963, City Council began notifying area property owners of their intent to purchase land tracts north of and adjacent to Fiesta Gardens on Salina, Concho, and Chicon Streets.³¹ Meanwhile, other private interests, such as the Little Texas amusement park company, took note of the deal, believing it had set a precedent for future development, and vocalizing the expectation that the city would thereafter support other proposed public-private ventures proposed on Town Lake.

Perkins Group representative Warren Beaman reappeared before Council in June of 1964, requesting contract amendments via the acquisition of an additional half-block wide strip of land north of the lagoon, before completing the newly renamed "Laguna Gardens" development. Arguing that additional parking would be needed to accommodate population growth and an increase in tourism, Beaman cited optimistic forecasts predicting up to 250,000 visitors to the Gardens by 1968, the year San Antonio's Hemisfair Park would debut as the site of the World's Fair and Mexico was to host the Olympic Games.³² Beaman urged Council to capitalize on interregional tourism in Texas and beyond, proclaiming that, based on these figures, the city could expect a return of \$83,679 in 1968, which could increase to \$6,000,000 within five years. Noting the popularity of Florida's Cypress Gardens botanical theme park, Beaman stated that, "Cypress Gardens has a good clean tourist operation, attractive young ladies and fine young men, beautiful

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. September 20, 1962.

²⁶ "Fiesta Gardens to Bloom." *The Austin Statesman* (1914-1973), March 20, 1966.

²⁷ Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. March 21, 1963.

²⁸ City of Austin, Office of the City Manager. *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report*, 1. Dan M. Davidson for Austin City Council. Austin, Texas: May 29, 1974.

²⁹ "Fiesta Gardens Sets Sale Price." Glen Castlebury, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), May 31, 1967.

³⁰ "Waters Rough From Start." Glen Castlebury, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973); Austin, Texas. March 20, 1966.

³¹ City of Austin, Office of the City Manager. *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report*, p. 2. By Dan M. Davidson for Austin City Council. Austin, Texas: May 29, 1974.

³² Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. June 25, 1964.

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plantings and a good show.”³³ Beaman further proffered the “possibility of an excellent return to the City of Austin for a piece of property for which the City Planners and City Administrators can at the present time see no possible use that would bring the City more benefit than this operation.”³⁴

Though some Council members believed the contract to be inequitable due to the high price the city would necessarily pay to recover the land, the Council nonetheless voted to approve Beaman’s request. Gardens promoters, however, proceeded to incorporate the newly acquired land into the shop and concession area, leaving their parking to the south on the East End of Festival Beach (as required by the April 1963 contract, which called for 550 parking spaces on the beach south), risking the ire of City Council. Meanwhile, in 1964 and 1965, the city expanded area land acquisition plans for Fiesta Gardens to include tracts north of what was then known as Bergman Avenue (now Jessie E. Segovia St.), between Canadian (now Robert Martinez Jr. St.) and Anthony Streets. Two such land tracts, once purchased, were traded for parcels owned by the Austin Independent School District in October of 1965 to facilitate the construction of Martin Middle School at the intersection of Haskell and Comal Streets.³⁵ 1965 also saw Gardens promoters request Council’s permission to operate an excursion motorboat on Town Lake. Council members dragged their feet, but eventually approved the request in the spring of 1966, after learning that the Texas Medical Association (TMA) had arranged to host their annual convention at Fiesta Gardens that April, one month before the Gardens officially opened to the public.³⁶

Fiesta Gardens 1966-1967

The original Fiesta Gardens complex was mostly built out as of 1966, with near-completion of its principal buildings, as well as a partially covered grandstand seating 1000 for water skiing and other water-based entertainment. Other features included outdoor rose and fern gardens surrounded by tropical and native Texas plants (including palm trees, banana trees, and native xeriscaping such as fruit trees, bougainvillea, mountain laurel, crepe myrtle, and sago palm); and the completed lagoon and a half-mile trail, complete with scenic overlooks, encircled the lagoon for hiking and picturesque views. The venue officially opened to the public as “Fiesta Gardens” in May 1966 with great fanfare.³⁷

Located on the periphery of a working-class Mexican-American residential enclave, Fiesta Gardens catered to Anglo Americans seeking an “ethnic” mid-century entertainment experience. The architecture of Fiesta Gardens, however, capitalized on broad stereotypes that reveal a lack of understanding (if not disregard) of the distinctions between the architecture of Mexico and that of the American southwest. This is especially apparent in the Concession and Market buildings, each of which feature the low profiles, (false) exterior vigas, and decorative carved wood column capitals common in the regional Pueblo and Pueblo Revival architecture of New Mexico. The designers borrowed freely from various regions and periods, resulting in an architectural hybrid that is neither western American nor Mexican in design.

The Chaparral, Fiesta Gardens’ flower-festooned excursion motorboat, shuttled visitors to and from nearby lakeside hotels downtown, and provided water-based tours of the lagoon. This mode of transporting visitors to site served to bring customers in without travelling by car through the Mexican neighborhood in which Fiesta gardens was nestled. In addition to scenic tours (via an open sightseeing trailer known as the “Tijuana Taxi”) and garden trails, entertainment included aquatic shows on the lagoon. A professional water ski stunt team, assembled from a variety of locations (including Austin, Houston, San Antonio, Ohio, and as far reaching as Mexico), performed three times daily.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. October 21, 1965.

³⁶ “Fiesta Gardens to Bloom.” *The Austin Statesman* (1914-1973), March 20, 1966.

³⁷ “Fiesta Gardens Performers.” *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), July 31, 1966. Austin, Texas.

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Also featured were ski jumping, barefoot skiing, water ballet, and water-based kite flying performances. The Mercado de México, a Mexican-themed market showcasing “authentic décor,” offered “authentic examples of arts and crafts,” providing shoppers with “an abundance of gifts, souvenirs, and curios.”³⁸ The market housed ten shopping stalls flanking a garden courtyard square and fountain centerpiece. A clear, convertible, gabled roof covered the courtyard in winter months, creating a temporary conservatory in which to controlling temperature and humidity; the retractable “climate control”³⁹ roof was removed during warmer weather, making for an “all seasons attraction.”⁴⁰ In May 1966, market vendors included Jane’s Knit and Wear Shop, operated by Mr. and Mrs. John Wilkinson; the Capitol Arts Society, whose stalls featured Native American works from the southwest; a Mexican Curio shop, and a Tarascan Crafts shop.⁴¹ The concession building and dining hall, a “modern air-conditioned”⁴² facility, provided patrons with food and a place to eat, while the stage and patio accommodated lively entertainment and dancing.

Despite the opening pageantry and bold forecasts, Fiesta Gardens was financially unsuccessful. In July 1966, Perkins Group principals submitted their first payment to the City with disappointing results. The payment, totaling \$238.94, included a Perkins Group \$100 monthly rent payment to the City and gross receipt taxes on water show, flower display, and concession operations, representing 2.4% of concessions and souvenir receipts and 8% of the gate receipts in June 1966.⁴³ The city had earlier agreed to pay for beautification at Fiesta Gardens Beach at 20% monthly of what the Perkins Group owed the city. There was no city budgetary or project oversight to account for the amount spent on beautification, however. In response to a request for information from Council, City Finance Director, Norman Burker, reported that he had “not received an accounting of the total price of the beautification work, (nor did he) know the nature of the work.”⁴⁴

In the fall of 1966, the Perkins Group asked Council for permission to build a road from IH35 to Fiesta Gardens to increase visibility and provide a direct route for visitor traffic from the highway so as to increase facility business and revenue; Council declined the request citing lack of funds.⁴⁵ In January 1967, however, after City Council authorized the purchase of several lots on Chicon St. just north of Fiesta Gardens, the Planning Commission weighed in in favor of the Perkins Group, recommending that, instead of purchasing more land, Council to stick to the Town Lake master plan, which called for connecting Festival Beach and Holly beach via installation of a road running north. That same month, public conflict erupted between Fiesta Gardens’ Perkins Group and the not-for-profit Austin Boat Club. Though Town Lake was not open to public boating, the Boat Club had long held their annual boat race charity fundraiser, and also hosted National Drag Boat Races, on Town Lake.^{46 47} The Perkins Group nonetheless asked Council to limit, and even consider disallowing, the Austin Boat Club’s weekend drag boat races, though both groups claimed their events were the primary tourist draw to Town Lake. Austin Boat Club officials argued that, though Perkins Group principals had invested large amounts of money in Fiesta Gardens, that didn’t give the privately-owned Perkins Group “license to completely control Town Lake.”⁴⁸ The Austin Boat Club ultimately prevailed despite the Perkins Group’s opposition. And, though their events were highly unpopular with the adjacent residential community

³⁸ Fiesta Gardens brochure. *Fiesta Gardens*. Austin, Texas: April 5, 1966. Austin History Center.

³⁹ “Fiesta Gardens to Lure Tourists This Spring: Fun And Flora.” *Austin in Action*, April 1966, 40.

⁴⁰ “Fiesta Gardens.” (Press release) April 5, 1966.

⁴¹ “New Central Texas Attraction: Fiesta Gardens.” *The Showcase*, p. 4-5. Austin, Texas: July 1966.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ “Budget Still Ailing: City Receives First Payments From Medicare, Fiesta Gardens.” Glen Castlebury, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973); Austin, Texas. July 30, 1966.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ “Planning Commission Rejects Fiesta Gardens Road Plan.” *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), January 11, 1967.

⁴⁶ “The Boat Club and Its View of Town Lake Use.” *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), January 15, 1967.

⁴⁷ *Alternative Sites For Drag Boat Racing in Austin*. Report prepared by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department for Austin City Council, October 1977.

⁴⁸ “The Boat Club and Its View of Town Lake Use.” *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), January 15, 1967.

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(due to high levels of noise, traffic, and light pollution, as well as trash left by revelers), Boat Club drag racing events continued on Town Lake unabated through January of 1978.⁴⁹

As of late May 1967, Fiesta Gardens was still unprofitable, and the Perkins Groups approached Austin's Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to propose a city buy-back of the site, claiming that they had so far spent \$331,000 on site improvements. With the Board recommending that the city buy-back the Gardens, a few Council members openly asked the Perkins Group for a transparent purchase price, indicating interest, provided the price wasn't too high. Perkins Groups reps demurred in response, saying that they'd "have to see what formula we can work out."⁵⁰ Just two days later at Council's regular Thursday meeting, however, Perkins Group attorney Dick Baker stated that stockholder disappointment over poor performance and discontent with Fiesta Gardens lease conditions and general operations had made it impossible to raise additional local capital for the venture. Baker cautioned that, if the City didn't recapture Fiesta Gardens, the Perkins Group would be forced to look for capital outside of Texas to provide new and different attractions to lure tourists. Baker subsequently claimed that the Perkins Group had spent \$225,000- \$250,000 on improvements to buildings and plants on site. In response, Council unanimously voted to direct the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to study potential city uses for the site in the following week. By a slim 3-2 margin, Council also voted to obtain an independent appraisal (the two voting against the independent appraisal notably having been involved in pushing for the original deal and leasing terms). Several Council members voiced criticism of the original 1963 deal, with Councilman Dick Nichols noting that the City tax rolls showed only \$80,600 worth of site improvements (though that figure did not include the money spent on plants). Council opted to wait for the results of their own appraisal and suggestions for use by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board before considering the Perkins Group's offer and purchase price.⁵¹

The following week, in an official letter to Council, the Perkins Group offered to set Fiesta Gardens' sale price at \$250,000, specifically in the form of \$80,000 in cash, and a \$170,000 note "at current interest bond rates."⁵² Another letter detailed a list of the Perkins Group's problems and complaints with the site, and included the following demands: that the city commit to and "set a definite date for paving a road from IH-35 to the Gardens entrance; that the city assist with placing markers directing tourists to the Gardens; that the city approve a "moratorium" (not explicitly defined, but presumed to be a moratorium on the payment of rent and sales percentages); that "City Council adopt a resolution on the 'official attitude' towards the Gardens"; and that the Perkins Group be allowed "more flexibility in the Gardens lease contract statement of purpose." Additionally, Perkins Group representatives insisted that \$225,000- \$250,000 worth of improvements had been made (despite the tax rolls showing only \$80,600), and argued that the original 1963 lease contract cited a \$450,000 recapture figure that would apply were the City to find a need and/or use for the site.⁵³ Council rejected the offer on June 2, 1967, on the grounds that the purchase price was too high, particularly given the discrepancy between the \$250,000 worth of site improvements the Perkins Group cited and the \$80,600 listed on the tax rolls. Additionally, "Financial statements filed with the city showed that Fiesta Gardens earned \$35,000 in gross receipts during the first year of operation (1966); those receipts plus the \$100 monthly ground rental netted the city only \$2,804 during the first year."⁵⁴

In November 1967 the Perkins Group returned to the city with a reduced purchase price of \$130,000, conceding that the venture had consistently lost money since opening in May 1966, and offering to transfer all buildings and assets on

⁴⁹ *Alternative Sites For Drag Boat Racing in Austin*. Report prepared by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department for Austin City Council, October 1977.

⁵⁰ "Councilmen Want Figures." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), May 24, 1967.

⁵¹ "City Repossession Studied." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), May 26, 1967.

⁵² "Council Balks at Fiesta Gardens Price Tag: Fiesta Gardens Price Too High?" *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), May 31, 1967.

⁵³ "Fiesta Gardens Sets Sale Price." GLEN CASTLEBURY, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), May 31, 1967.

⁵⁴ "Council Refuses Gardens." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), June 2, 1967.

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site to the city, along with a certified list of debts, notes, and liabilities. Perkins Group officials contended that Gardens' stockholders would lose \$224,000 in the proposed buy-back were the city to recapture the property.⁵⁵ City Manager Bob Tinstman recommended that the city purchase the site using "interim financing until funds are budgeted to pay off the balance,"⁵⁶ and in their December 8, 1967 meeting, Council unanimously voted to purchase the 20-acre Fiesta Gardens tract and accompanying lease for \$115,000, along with the Gardens excursion boat for a price not to exceed \$1,800, and the purchase of a ticket machine and cash register for \$400. Mayor Pro-Tem Emma Long, long a critic of the original 1963 50-year private lease on public land, applauded the purchase, declaring that, the "city is really getting a very good buy" and that, "the citizens of Austin will be grateful to get that land back."⁵⁷

To facilitate the purchase, "Council authorized the borrowing of \$100,000 from City National Bank at 4.25% interest," while the remaining \$15,000 would be paid by available city funds. The Council decided to immediately begin utilizing the facility for private parties, meetings, and special events while considering a variety of potential long-term uses, including a convention center, a community recreation center, a senior center, and a tourist attraction.⁵⁸ Some believed that a tourist attraction and/or convention center would bolster Austin's effort to retain its ranking as the number 3 convention city in Texas, buffering against competition from San Antonio's new HemisFair facility, which would host the 1968 World's Fair event, featuring a Pan-American theme and water ski-shows.⁵⁹ Arguing that, "I want that Garden open for the people,"⁶⁰ Emma Long reiterated her long-standing objection to site privatization, insisting that, as a city facility, Fiesta Gardens should be available to the public. On Friday, December 15, 1967, officials signed paperwork officially transferring property ownership to the city.⁶¹

Operation of the City-Owned Venue, 1968-69

After 1967, Fiesta Gardens was adapted for public use as a cultural and recreational civic center where community-based and city-sponsored events and entertainment, such as "Frolic Nights"⁶² and the long-running Austin Aqua Festival, took place. The Aqua Festival incorporated earlier Fiesta Gardens ski shows and lagoon boat tours into a new water-based entertainment lineup, which included regional water ski tournaments, Austin Boat Club drag boat races, and the Miss Austin Aqua Beauty Pageant. Other Aqua Fest programming at Fiesta Gardens included "Ethnic Fest Nights," designed to appeal to various Austin demographics by highlighting the "cultures that helped make Austin great."⁶³ "Ethnic Fest Nights" included Czech Night, La Noche Fiesta de Mexicana (also known contemporaneously as Mexican Night), Western Night, Soul Night, and German Night, each promising "authentic" food and entertainment.⁶⁴ Attendees were encouraged to wear "German, Mexican, or western clothes" corresponding to the theme for the evening.⁶⁶

In February 1968, the city adopted a new Town Lake Comprehensive Development Plan, which called for the continuing expansion of the Fiesta Gardens complex, including the acquisition of one tier of then-residential land

⁵⁵ "'Optimistic': Fiesta Gardens Purchase Indicated by Officials." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), December 2, 1967.

⁵⁶ "Agreement Near on Fiesta Gardens." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), December 6, 1967.

⁵⁷ "City Purchases Fiesta Gardens." Glen Castlebury, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), December 08, 1967.

⁵⁸ City of Austin, Office of the City Manager. *Fiesta Gardens*. Management and operations proposal memo from R. M. Tinstman to Austin City Council. Austin, Texas: January 16, 1968.

⁵⁹ Water ski shows at HemisFair 1968. The Portal to Texas History. University of North Texas Digital Library.

⁶⁰ "Tourism: City Plans to Operate Fiesta Gardens." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), Jan 26, 1968.

⁶¹ "Fiesta Gardens Transferred Back to City's Ownership." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), December 16, 1967.

⁶² "Austin Swings' Spotlights Fiesta Gardens Frolic Nights." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), April 29, 1972.

⁶³ "At Three New 'Aquafests' Add International Touch" *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), Aug 02, 1968.

⁶⁴ "Ethnic Fest Nights To Bring Sparkle to Fiesta Gardens." *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), August 4, 1972.

⁶⁵ "At Three New 'Aquafests' Add International Touch" *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), Aug 02, 1968.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

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parcels on the north side of Bergman Avenue.⁶⁷ Shortly thereafter, in April of 1969, a group of East Austin residents sued in 167th District Court, accusing the city of “deliberately allowing the seven properties it had already purchased near their homes to become “dilapidated” and “unsanitary” in order to depreciate property values so the city could buy area land tracts cheaply.”⁶⁸ Photographic evidence showed vacant homes, debris, weeds, trash, abandoned cars, open sewer lines, and stagnant water pools on the city-owned lots, substantiating the plaintiffs’ charges. The group also complained that, since the city began purchasing area land tracts for the expansion of Fiesta Gardens, city staff had threatened the owners of adjacent properties with condemnation and eminent domain if they did not sell. The suit alleged that the city had offered to purchase their respective properties for “less than the purchase price and also less than the balance due on the mortgages.” The suit further alleged that, during a meeting between property owners and city representatives (City Manager Bob Tinstman and Bill Ward of the city’s legal department), the plaintiffs were told that, “the offers were final and were threatened with a court action unless they sold at the prices offered.” City agents were also accused of informing homeowners they had “paid too much for their propert(ies) and (the purchase price) therefore did not represent market value.”

City Manager Bob Tinstman denied the charges, insisting that the city had improved the alleged nuisance properties, and that area land tracts had been purchased for use as public park space and a playground adjacent to Martin Middle School. Describing the Fiesta Gardens expansion plans as “incidental,” Tinstman maintained that city staff had assured the plaintiffs would receive “adequate compensation” and fair treatment in the land acquisition process. Aware of a growing public relations disaster, City Council temporarily ceased purchasing area land tracts in the wake of the suit. Community discontent with Fiesta Gardens nonetheless manifested simultaneously in a series of minor burglary and vandalism incidents, however. One such incident, involving the theft of purses during a private party for Texas legislators, took place on May of 1969. Vandalism was more frequent, as exemplified via a June 1969 attack on the Fiesta Gardens excursion boat, which was ransacked and then set adrift on Town Lake.⁶⁹

Expansion Plans and Opposition, 1970-1974

Renewed calls for area land acquisition for Fiesta Gardens’ expansion arose in 1970 when the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) assumed operation of Fiesta Gardens. In 1974, PARC proposed a revised Town Lake Development Plan, which included acquisition of all remaining privately owned lots south of Bergman Avenue, as well as all residential lots on the north side of Bergman Avenue between Chicon and Anthony Streets. A 1974 *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report* issued by the City Manager’s office noted that the desired properties were to be acquired either through an agreement approved by the City Council or through eminent domain proceedings.⁷⁰ Council authorized one such purchase in February of 1974,⁷¹ and several others in March of 1974, ranging from \$4,000 on the low end to \$11,500 on the high end.^{72 73}

Land procurement plans were again temporarily postponed in April 1974 after yet another controversy involving the city’s Property Management Department and area property owners. Appearing before Council on April 18, attorney Cicily Simms, representing 63-year old Joe Hernandez of 2106 Bergman Avenue, complained of the city’s land acquisition methods, calling the process a “horror story.” Mr. Hernandez had built his own home 20-years prior and

⁶⁷ City of Austin, Office of the City Manager. *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report*, p. 5. By Dan M. Davidson for Austin City Council. Austin, Texas: May 29, 1974.

⁶⁸ “City Accused in Land Case.” Tom Barry, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), April 5, 1969.

⁶⁹ “Vandalism Problems at Fiesta Gardens.” *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), June 27, 1969.

⁷⁰ City of Austin, Office of the City Manager. *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report*, p. 8. By Dan M. Davidson for Austin City Council. Austin, Texas: May 29, 1974.

⁷¹ Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. February 14, 1974.

⁷² Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. March 7, 1974.

⁷³ Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. March 21, 1974.

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wanted to remain,⁷⁴ but was coerced to sell for roughly \$5,000 when threatened with condemnation through eminent domain. Noting that, “Hernandez speaks very little English and his wife speaks none at all. He really doesn’t know what he signed,” Simms explained that Hernandez believed “condemnation” meant that the city would demolish his home without reimbursement if he did not agree to sell.⁷⁵ City Legal confirmed that the city could indeed condemn the home and evict the owner, paying a “fair market price,” should the owner refuse to sell. Simms urged Council to provide relocation assistance (in the form of money and support services) to Mr. Hernandez, expressing concern that the Hernandez family had been unable to find suitable new housing accommodations for the \$5,000 the city paid them for the property. “That means they’ll either move in with relatives or go into low-income housing,” she said, and “[t]he city has a duty to consider relocation.”⁷⁶

Despite the ongoing plan to purchase 17 area land parcels, as of May 1974, the city’s official position was to oppose relocation assistance, as officials maintained that Austin was “not obligated to fork over relocation monies.”⁷⁷ Procedurally, written notice citing the city’s intent to purchase was mailed to property owners, “informing them of the project and the parts of their property that are to be acquired.”⁷⁸ Jessie E. Segovia, who lived at 2010 Bergman Avenue across the street from Fiesta Gardens, had received one such notice dated June 12, 1974.⁷⁹ The letters caused panic and uncertainty among residents who, though they did not wish to leave, had resigned themselves to move. The lack of affordable housing options and concomitant difficulty of finding comparable replacement housing at the city’s purchase price only added to residents’ alarm.⁸⁰

East Austin residents won support from Council Member Jeff Friedman, however, who called for a public hearing on the matter before the city acquired any additional land for the expansion of Fiesta Gardens. Council held the hearing on June 6, 1974 to discuss expansion plans, as well as the adoption of a relocation assistance program modeled on the Urban Renewal Agency’s Title 2 program, which utilized relocation personnel to assist dispossessed homeowners. The hearing was well attended by residents, neighborhood organizations (such as the East First Street Center Advisory Committee and the East Austin Civic Association), church groups, and the Brown Berets, all of whom decried the city’s land acquisition schemes and ensuing residential displacement. Despite the uproar, Austin Parks and Recreation Director Jack Robinson recommended that, “the city continue the (land) acquisition policy (because) the area was very heavily used for Aqua Festivals, boat races, and clubhouse rentals,” and that he hoped to “have (the acquisitions) completed by the bicentennial year.”⁸¹ Emerging as an outspoken community advocate, Jessie Segovia responded on behalf of area residents, requesting that the city halt Fiesta Gardens’ expansion plans and ensuing residential displacement, that residents may preserve what remained of their community. “All the people here want to stay,” he said, “but they think it’s useless fighting trying to fight the city.”⁸² Stating that he “had lived (in his home) for 13 years,

⁷⁴ “Residents Accept City Edict: Will Be Relocated Because of Fiesta Gardens Expansion.” John O’Connell, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), June 5, 1974.

⁷⁵ “City House Acquisition: ‘Horror Story’ Related.” John O’Connell, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), April 19, 1974.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Some View It As A Money Gobbling ‘Fiasco’.” Carol Fowler, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), May 28, 1974.

⁷⁸ City of Austin, Office of the City Manager. *Fiesta Gardens Land Acquisition and Development Report*, p. 11. By Dan M. Davidson for Austin City Council. Austin, Texas: May 29, 1974.

⁷⁹ City of Austin, Property Management Department. Land acquisition notice from Joseph Morahan, Public Property Manager, to Jessie Segovia. Austin, Texas: June 12, 1974.

⁸⁰ “Residents Accept City Edict: Will Be Relocated Because of Fiesta Gardens Expansion.” John O’Connell, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), June 5, 1974.

⁸¹ Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. Austin, Texas: June 6, 1974.

⁸² “Residents Accept City Edict: Will Be Relocated Because of Fiesta Gardens Expansion.” John O’Connell, staff writer. *The Austin Statesman* (1921-1973), June 5, 1974.

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had recently just paid for (it), and did not wish to move,”⁸³ Segovia questioned the necessity of the city’s land acquisition program in the Fiesta Gardens area. Recalling “a time when he could walk down to the water from his house, and when he had neighbors living on the land now inside the fence that encircles (Fiesta Gardens),”⁸⁴ Segovia vowed that “he would not move without a fight.”⁸⁵ A 1983 Austin American-Statesman retrospective aptly summarized community sentiment in 1974, noting that, “For Segovia and many of his neighbors, the city’s attempts to buy them out and the barbed wire fence surrounding Fiesta Gardens are symbolic of what they feel is indifference to the needs of the East Austin neighborhood.”⁸⁶

Council Member Friedman vociferously supported the idea of relocation assistance, insisting that, “the city (should) provide additional relocation benefits for displaced residents, in addition to market value cash payments for their property.” “My thinking,” he remarked, “is that we can reimburse people who are having to move out because the city wants to plant a tree or build a parking lot (particularly because) there is already a dearth of low-income housing in Austin and residents cannot find replacement homes for the amount of their payment.”⁸⁷ He proposed that Council and citizens reconvene in August to resolve the issue, allowing both sides time to develop new solutions that might satisfy all parties involved. Council then also directed City Attorney Don Butler to draft a city relocation ordinance for review at the August meeting.

In the intervening months, between June and August 1974, Jessie Segovia formed the East Town Lake Citizens Neighborhood Association (ETLCNA), of which he served as inaugural President, to organize area residents in service to saving the neighborhood, and to advocate for relocation assistance on behalf of those who’d chosen to move.⁸⁸ “Until now we’ve had to speak as individuals; now we’re organized officially,” he said. “It’s not more money that we want. It’s to keep our homes, to keep our neighborhoods. That’s what’s important.”⁸⁹ “[B]y city encroachment, this project would have devastating consequences on our Mexican Culture, our Barrio, and our dignity.”⁹⁰

Council and community negotiations continued in August 1974, resulting in the adoption of an official city relocation program, operated by the Urban Renewal Agency, that provided relocation benefits (including money and relocation assistance) to all displaced residents, retroactive to January 1, 1974.⁹¹ On October 3, 1974, Council and community representatives negotiated a mutually agreeable Gardens expansion and corresponding land acquisition plan for the remaining land parcels in question. A compromise was reached, allowing property owners who wanted to remain in their homes to do so without fear of eminent domain. Speaking on behalf of the newly organized East Town Lake Citizens Neighborhood Association (ETLCNA), Jessie Segovia complimented the city on the settlement, noting that, “most of the (affected) residents were pleased with the results.”⁹² A long-lasting and influential community organization, Segovia’s ETLCNA remains active today. As a result of ETLCNA’s efforts, Bergman Avenue was renamed Jessie E. Segovia St. in August of 2006, honoring Mr. Segovia’s extraordinary service to his community.⁹³

⁸³ Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. Austin, Texas: June 6, 1974.

⁸⁴ “Garden of thorns: Wary neighborhood, city replan East Austin Park.” James Pinkerton, staff writer. *Austin American-Statesman*, February 13, 1983.

⁸⁵ “Man Says He’ll Fight Relocation.” *The Austin Statesman (1921-1973)*, June 6, 1974.

⁸⁶ “Garden of thorns: Wary neighborhood, city replan East Austin Park.” James Pinkerton, staff writer. *Austin American-Statesman*, February 13, 1983.

⁸⁷ “Friedman Urges Fiesta Gardens Public Hearing.” *The Austin Statesman (1921-1973)*, April 11, 1974.

⁸⁸ “Town Laker Group Goal: Save Homes. Gardens Alternate Proposed.” *The Austin Citizen*, August 24, 1974.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ On the Fiesta Gardens expansion and the formation of the East Town Lake Citizens Neighborhood Association. Austin, Texas. Jessie E. Segovia. October 1974.

⁹¹ Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. Austin, Texas: August 22, 1974.

⁹² Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. Austin, Texas: October 3, 1974.

⁹³ “Jessie Segovia Biography, 1937-2000; Austin, Texas.” Hortensia Palomares. Austin, Texas. August 11, 2006.

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Today, the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) still manages Fiesta Gardens, and the property continues to serve as an event facility. Fiesta Gardens hosts both small, community-based affairs, such as community meetings, quinceañeras, weddings, and high school commencement ceremonies; and large events, including local and regional music, entertainment, and food festivals.

Conclusion

As a functionally-related complex consisting of buildings, objects, structures, and landscape architecture that was designed and built at the same time for the same purpose, Fiesta Gardens is historically and aesthetically united by a unified site plan and design aesthetic created for the purpose of promoting lake-side gardens, water-based entertainment, a (faux) "Mexican-themed" shopping experience, and tourism. A majority of the property's buildings, structures, objects and features- all but the lakeside trail, which has largely eroded- retain a high degree of integrity in location, setting, use, materials, workmanship, design, feeling, and association even today.

As an eclectic mid-century modernist spin off of Spanish Colonial and Pueblo Revival styles, Fiesta Gardens embodies the distinctive characteristics and construction methods of a local variation on these architectural styles, including form, proportion, structure, plan, and style; materials are fully integrated with the overall lines and massing typical: the buildings are simple, rectilinear structures built of concrete masonry units (CMUs) with a textured stucco finish, painted in earth tones and punctuated by repetitive ornamental architectural elements, such as arched gateways, arcaded porticoes, projecting wooden roof timbers, and trim detailing offsetting otherwise plain walls for geometrical contrast. The arched entryways and porticoes, warm, earth-tone color scheme; and overall design aesthetic create a rhythmic pattern and sense continuous flow within the district. The district contains some of the only extant Spanish Colonial-Pueblo Revival commercial buildings in the Austin area, stylistically conveying perceived associations with the host East Austin Hispanic community and, more generally, contemporaneous Anglo conceptions of Mexican American culture.

Additionally, Fiesta Gardens features the work of local landscape architect, C.O. Jones, former City of Austin Parks superintendent, whose work was recognized for a high degree of quality and skill at the time. After completing Texas A & M's Landscape Architecture program,⁹⁴ Jones was called upon to design some of Austin's most important mid-century natural landscapes in his role as Parks Superintendent, including that of Fiesta Gardens and the city's famed Zilker Botanical Gardens.⁹⁵ Featuring an ostentatious display of exotic, flowering, and native vegetation, the landscape at Fiesta Gardens is unique and distinct from the surrounding parkland. The landscape possesses a high degree of artistic value, demonstrates aesthetic achievement, and much of the original landscape features retain integrity. The historic design, vegetation, boundaries, topography, and architectural features (minus the lagoon overlook and accompanying trail) are extant and remain a big part of the complex's aesthetic and recreational appeal.

The significance of the Fiesta Gardens district reflects the mid-century evolution of the development of Town Lake east of Interstate Highway 35; urban planning fueling the growth and development of the City of Austin; public-private attempts to establish Austin as a tourist destination in the mid-1960s; mid-century Anglo American constructions of Mexican-American culture and commercial attempts to capitalize on related Mexican-American stereotypes; civic engagement on the part of marginalized communities; and popular mid-century forms of entertainment. Fiesta Gardens' origins and development alongside Town Lake can thus be viewed as evidence of Austin's urban, economic, and cultural growth, and the mid-century societal and cultural norms of the prevailing civic elite, whose redevelopment plans negatively impacted disenfranchised citizens of color.

⁹⁴ Debbie Betancourt (daughter of C.O. Jones), interview by Kristen Hotopp, October 3, 2017.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

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Firstly, the Fiesta Gardens district represents local Chamber of Commerce members' purposeful extension and expansion of downtown Austin's recreation and entertainment amenities into near East Austin, at the expense of the host community, via the development of Town Lake. Secondly, Fiesta Gardens provides evidence of a (failed) local public-private partnership designed to foster economic growth, promote popular forms of mid-century entertainment, heighten the city's profile, and establish Austin as a tourist and convention destination. Thirdly, as a "Mexican" themed shopping and entertainment venue, conceived by and catering to Anglo Americans, the Fiesta Gardens complex offers insight into mid-century Anglo constructions and representations of Mexican-American culture, identity, and heritage, as well as mid-century social and cultural history. Fourthly, in keeping with the commodification of Mexican-American culture, the Fiesta Gardens district represents a local mid-century commercial use of the Spanish Colonial-Pueblo Revival style in a shopping and entertainment venue, enhanced by surrounding native and tropical landscape design. Lastly, the evolution of Fiesta Gardens offers insight into the importance of community organizing efforts by marginalized communities of color during the civil rights era. The district thus meets Criterion A, in the area of Community Planning and Development and Social History at the local level of significance. The property meets Criteria Consideration G because it is exceptionally significant for its association with community organizing efforts by the Austin Hispanic community to prevent displacement of East Austin residents for facility expansion through the early 1970s and represents the landmark victory of a neighborhood that sought to mitigate encroaching municipal development.

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Google Earth Map (August 28, 2018)



1. 30.250740° -97.727535°
2. 30.249596° -97.723698°
3. 30.249360° -97.723592°
4. 30.247775° -97.724309°
5. 30.247044° -97.724899°
6. 30.248570° -97.728532°
7. 30.250558° -97.727749°

Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

District Map



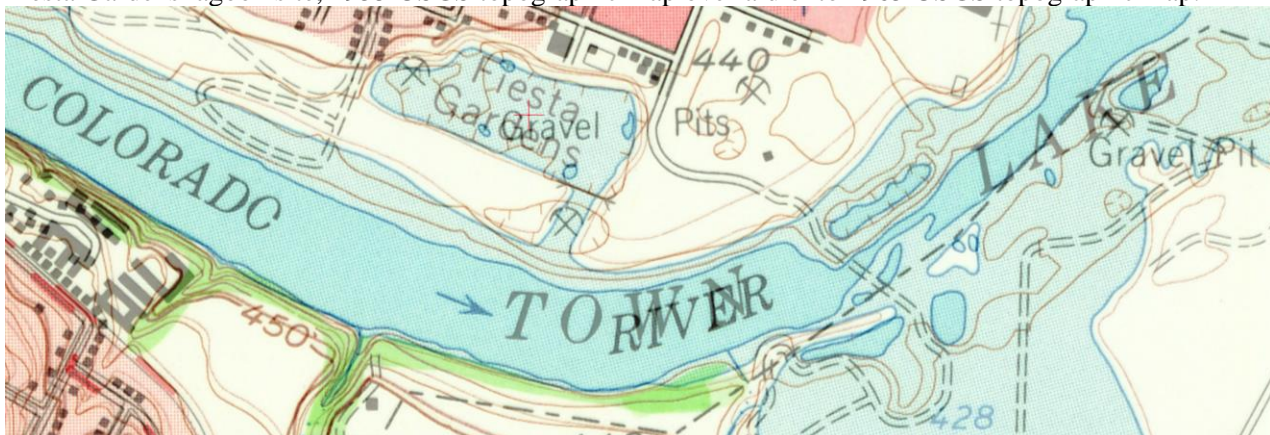
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Concession Building and Dining Hall	Building	1	1966	C
Outdoor Patio	Site	2	1966	C
Stage	Structure	3	1966	C
Courtyard Fountain	Object	4	1966	C
Spectator Grandstand	Structure	5	1966	C
Man-made Lagoon	Structure	6	Breeched and filled c. 1962	C
Mexican Market	Building	7	1966	C
Outdoor Pavilion	Structure	8	2003-04	NC
Restroom Facility	Building	9	After 1974	NC
City Maintenance Shed	Building	10	After 1974	NC
Boat Dock	Structure	11	2016	NC
Three Boat Storage Shipping Containers (counted as one structure)	Structure	12	2002	NC

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Fiesta Gardens lagoon site, 1955. USGS topographic map.



Fiesta Gardens lagoon site, 1955 USGS topographic map overlaid onto 1965 USGS topographic map.



Fiesta Gardens lagoon site, 1965. USGS topographic map.



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Fiesta Gardens site, 1952. HistoricAerials.com.

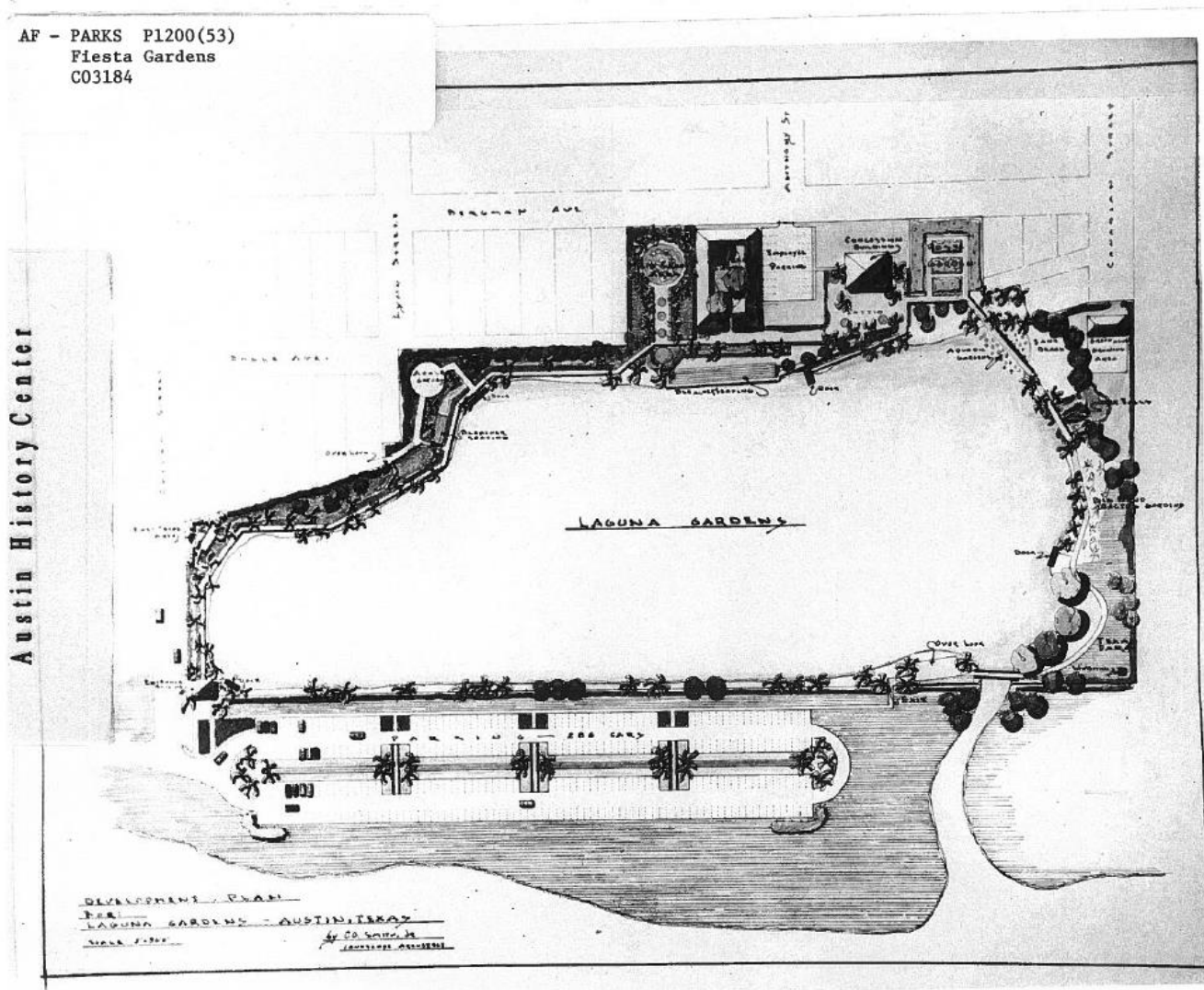


Fiesta Gardens site, 1964. HistoricAerials.com.



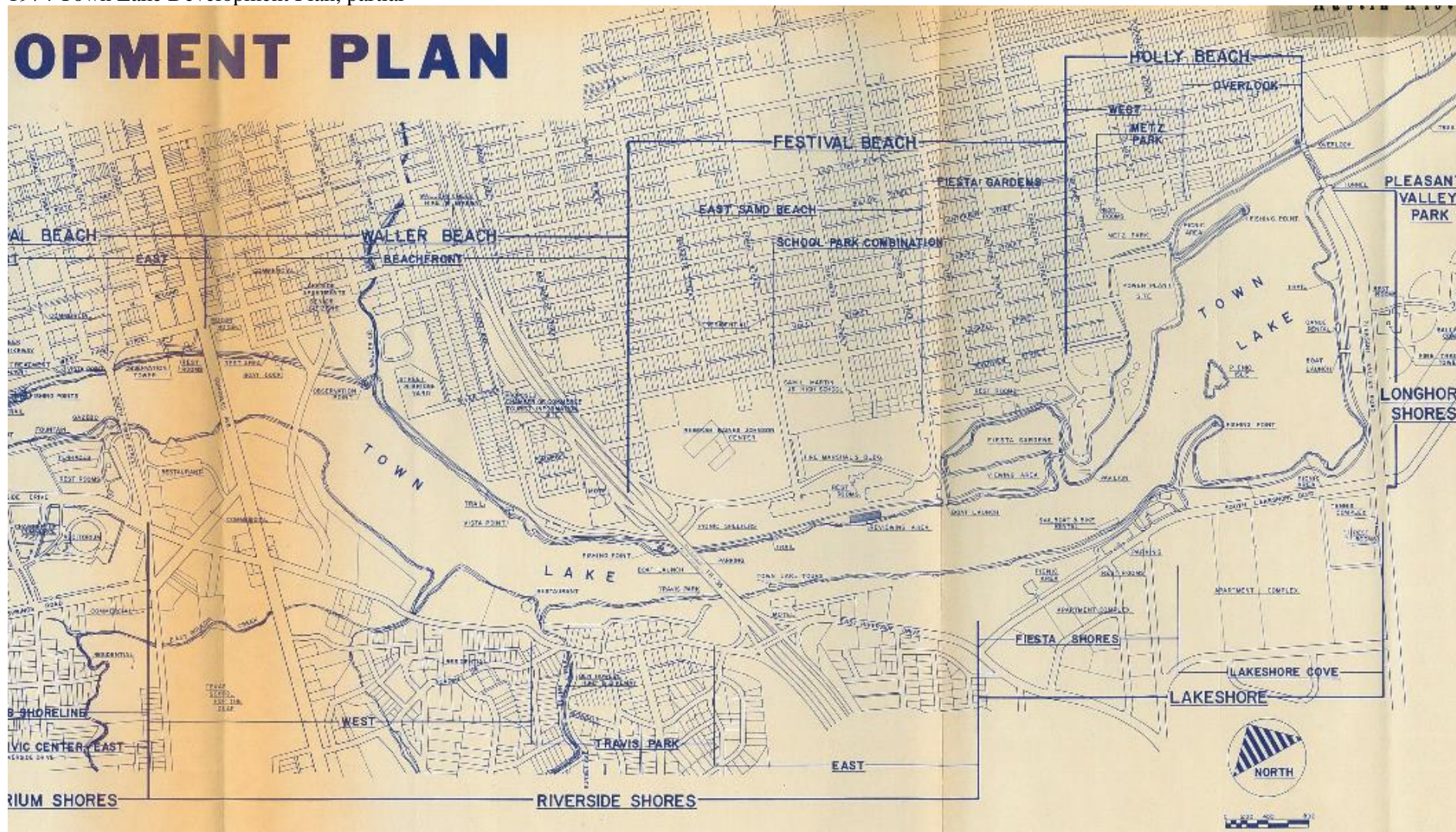
Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Austin Parks and Recreation Development Plan, 1960, Credit: Austin History Center.



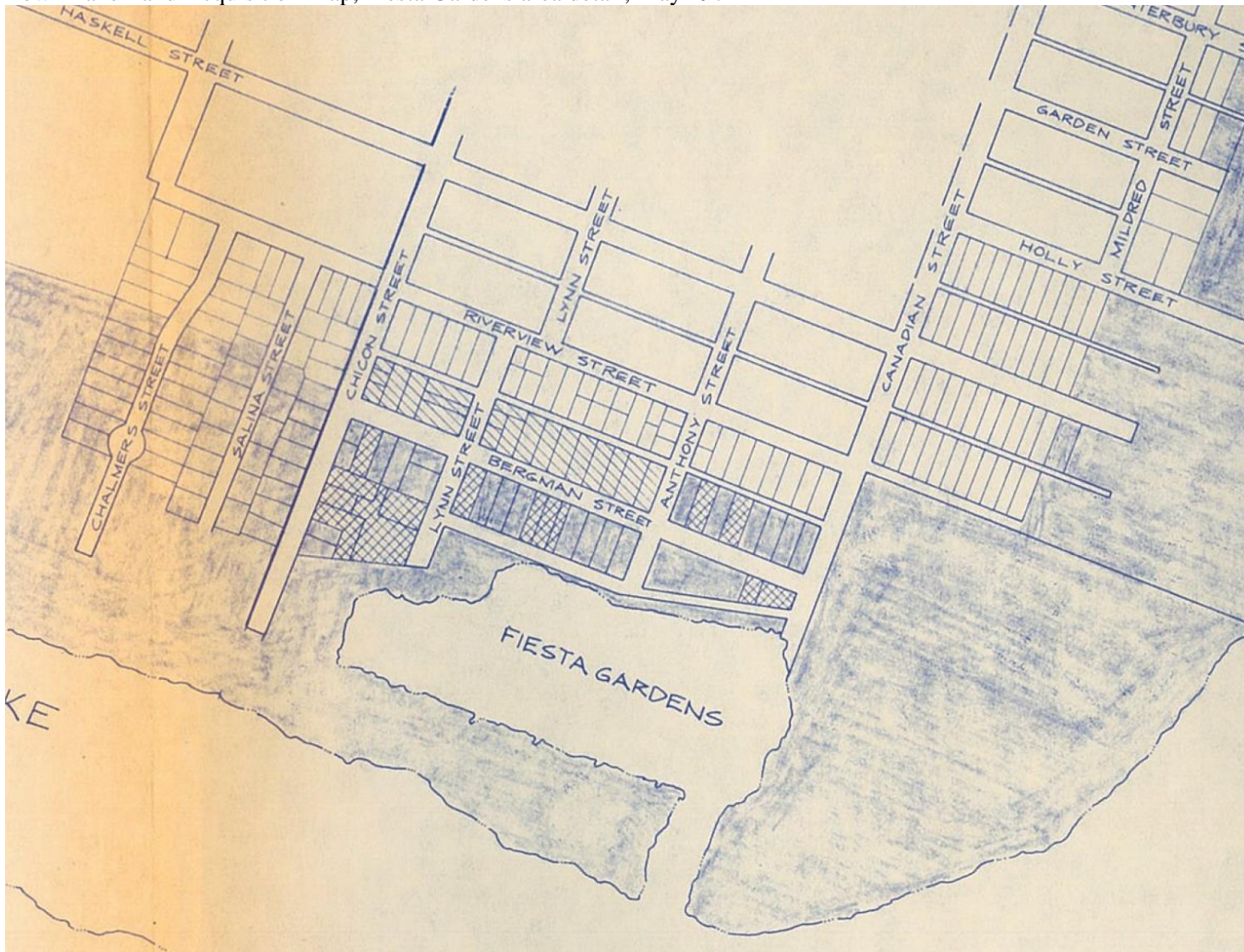
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1974 Town Lake Development Plan, partial



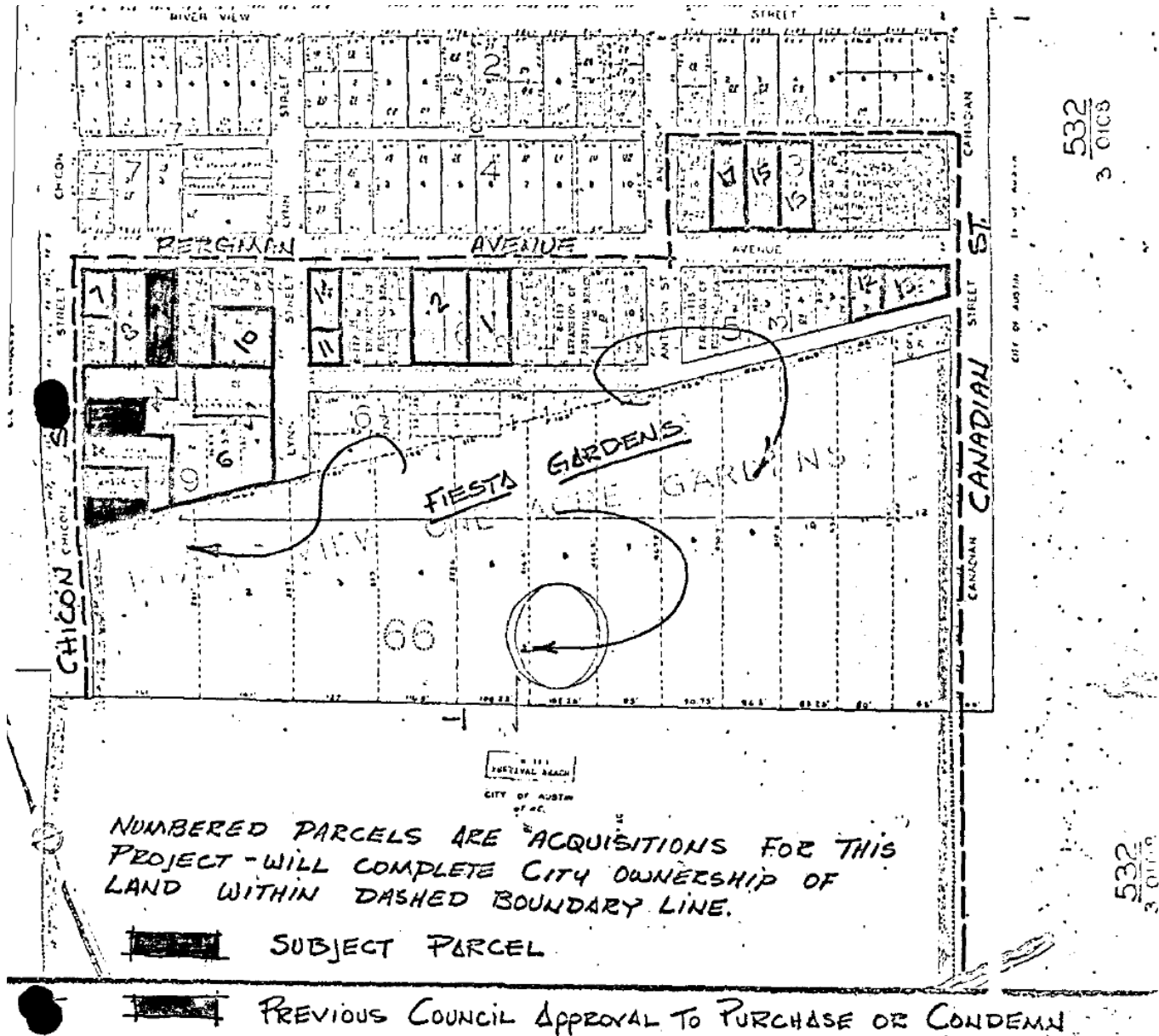
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Town Lake Land Acquisition Map, Fiesta Gardens area detail, May 1974



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

City of Austin Land Acquisition Map, Fiesta Gardens area. Austin City Council Meeting Minutes. March 1974.



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FIGURES

Aerial photo of the Fiesta Gardens site (aka the Stroberg Tract), circa 1963.
Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Aerial photo of the Fiesta Gardens site (aka the Stroberg Tract), circa 1964. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Fiesta Gardens site, 1966. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

1966 Fiesta Gardens advertisement. Austin History Center.

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*** GROUPS FROM 75 TO 650**

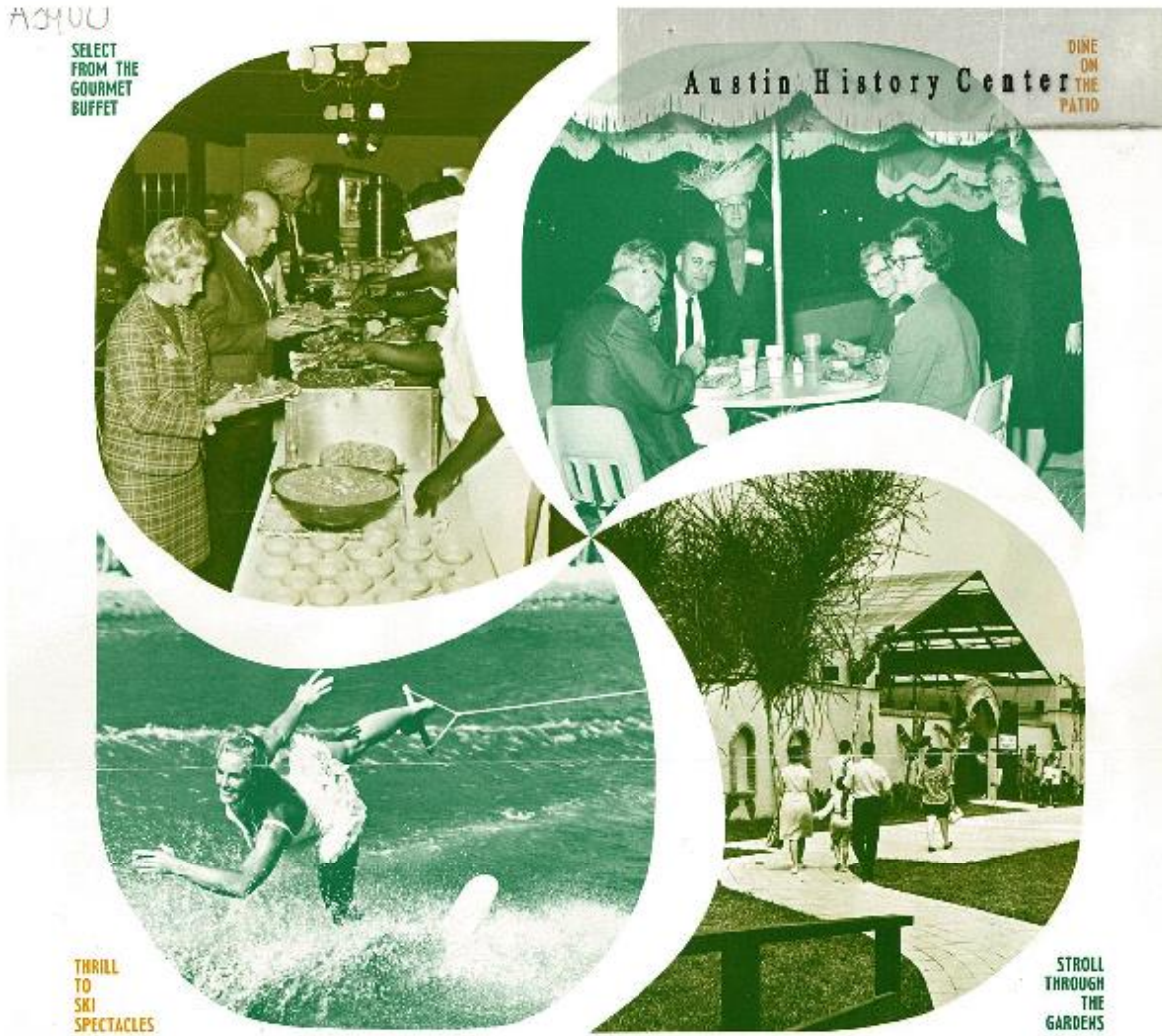
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Don't Miss Mrs. Tom Kemp

Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

1966 Fiesta Gardens advertisement. Austin History Center.



"The large lagoon is surrounded by palm trees, banana trees and a profusion of flowers and other plants. An excursion boat, frequently used to pick up visitors at lakeside hotels, offers tours of the lagoon and transportation to the grandstand area. Billy Garcia, a bare-foot boy with cheeks of tan, is making a big splash here in a spectacular water ski show featured at a unique new tourist attraction, 'Fiesta Gardens'." —Jimmy Banks, Dallas Morning News.



"Most of the water-skiing exhibitions I've seen in the past seemed tarrally plagued by falls and repetition, but the presentation worked up for the gardens' Friday night show was a fast-moving, nicely varied blend of dexterity, grace and excitement with a touch of broad comedy. With the additional benefits of the unusually landscaped grounds, the interesting show and such, it isn't too hard to imagine that Fiesta Gardens will become as much the tourist attraction as everybody anticipates." —John Bustin, Austin American Statesman



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 Telephone A/C 512, GR 8-8695

Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

1966 Fiesta Gardens advertisement. Austin History Center.

Spectacular WATER THRILL SHOW

FLORAL GARDENS of Texas

BOAT RIDES on the lagoon

Special DINNER MENUS

PATIO DANCING under the stars

Shopping IN THE MEXICAN MARKET

Unique Plants TROPICAL GREENHOUSE

Ride THE TIJUANA TAXI

SPECIAL EVENTS

AND MUCH MORE . . .

Austin History Center

Something for everyone assures your group plenty to do . . . to see . . . whatever age groups. Each person will have something to remember about your party at Fiesta Gardens. One group per evening date. So please make your reservations in ample time to avoid disappointment.

Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

1966 Fiesta Gardens advertisement. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

1966 Fiesta Gardens advertisement. Austin History Center.

Austin History Center

FIESTA GARDENS

* On Beautiful Town Lake in Austin, Texas
 * "Botanical Beauty Surrounding A Lovely Lagoon"

FIESTA GARDENS IS TRULY A PARADISE FOR LOVERS OF BEAUTY, WHERE A VIVID DISPLAY OF TEXAS FLORA AWAITS THE VISITOR YEAR-ROUND. AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS FIND A PERFECT SETTING THAT ENABLES THEM TO "TAKE HOME" A PERMANENT MEMORY OF TEXAS NATURAL BEAUTY.

THE "CHAPARRAL," A FLOWER BEDECKED BOAT QUIETLY POWERS ITS WAY UP AND DOWN, BACK AND FORTH ACROSS TOWN LAKE TO TRANSPORT PASSENGERS TO AND FROM THE GARDENS, MAKING THIS A FAVORITE RELAXATION SPOT WITH CONVENTIONEERS AT MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM AND VISITORS STAYING AT "ON THE LAKE" HOTELS.

A LEISURELY STROLL TAKES THE TOURIST AROUND A HALF MILE OF WALKWAYS, WHICH PASS A SPECIAL "PHOTO STADIUM" OVERLOOKING THE LAGOON, AND A UNIQUE "SAND STAGE" WITH TROPICAL BACKGROUND AT WATER LEVEL.

THERE'S EXCITEMENT, COLOR, AND PAGEANTRY DAILY WITH EXHIBITIONS OF KITE FLYING, BAREFOOT SKIING, MULTIPLE JUMPING, AND WATER BALLETS. THREE WATER SHOWS DAILY PROVIDE "AQUA ENTERTAINMENT EXTRAORDINAIRE." REGULAR SHOWTIMES ARE 12:30, 2:30 AND 4:30 PM, WITH ADDITIONAL EVENTS ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY. A COVERED SPECTATOR STAND WILL ACCOMMODATE 1,000 GUESTS.

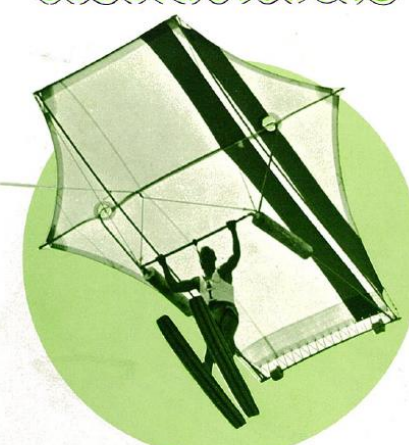
THE MEXICAN MARKET AT FIESTA GARDENS PROVIDES AN ABUNDANCE OF GIFTS, SOUVENIRS, AND CURIOS. AUTHENTIC EXAMPLES OF ARTS AND CRAFTS INCLUDE LEATHERWORK, STRAW, POTTERY, SILVER. THE "MERCADO" HAS A CONVERTIBLE ROOF MAKING IT AN "ALL SEASON" ATTRACTION, ENABLING THE INNER COURTYARD TO FLOURISH WITH TROPICAL PLANTS AND CITRUS FRUITS YEAR ROUND.

FIESTA GARDENS' SNACK BAR IS OPEN DAILY FROM 11 AM TO 5:30 PM, WITH A CATERING SERVICE AVAILABLE FOR SPECIAL PARTIES. A LARGE PATIO AND DANCE PAVILION PROVIDE A PLACE FOR ENTERTAINMENT.


FIESTA GARDENS just off Interstate Highway 35, on the north shore of Town Lake. Open daily, 11 am to 5:30 pm. Admission* \$1.50 adults; 50¢ children.
 *Special rates for groups.

AF- P1200 (53)

FIESTA GARDENS




**FIESTA GARDENS • Box 87 • Austin, Texas
 GR 8-8695 AC 512**



FIESTA GARDENS

ON BEAUTIFUL TOWN LAKE IN AUSTIN



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Fiesta Gardens entrance, circa 1965-1966. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, circa 1965-1966. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Fiesta Gardens lagoon and hiking trail, circa 1965. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Fiesta Gardens hiking trail, circa 1966. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Fiesta Gardens hiking trail, circa 1966. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens hiking trail, circa 1965. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Fiesta Gardens excursion boat, the Chaparral, circa 1966. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens lagoon and hiking trail from the Chaparral excursion boat, circa 1966. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

View of the Fiesta Garden lagoon and hiking trail circa 1966. Austin History Center.

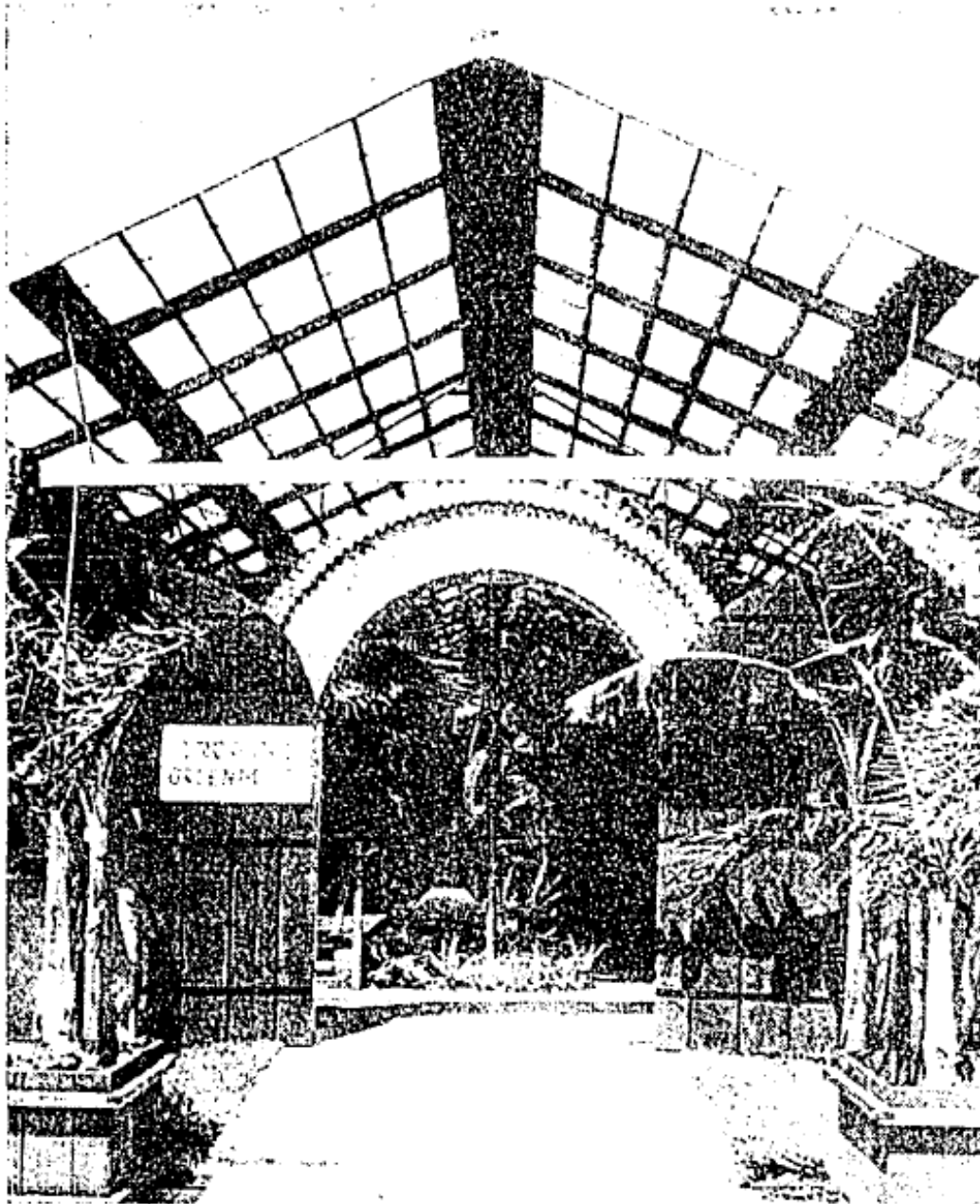


Fiesta Garden spectator stand, circa 1966. Austin History Center.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

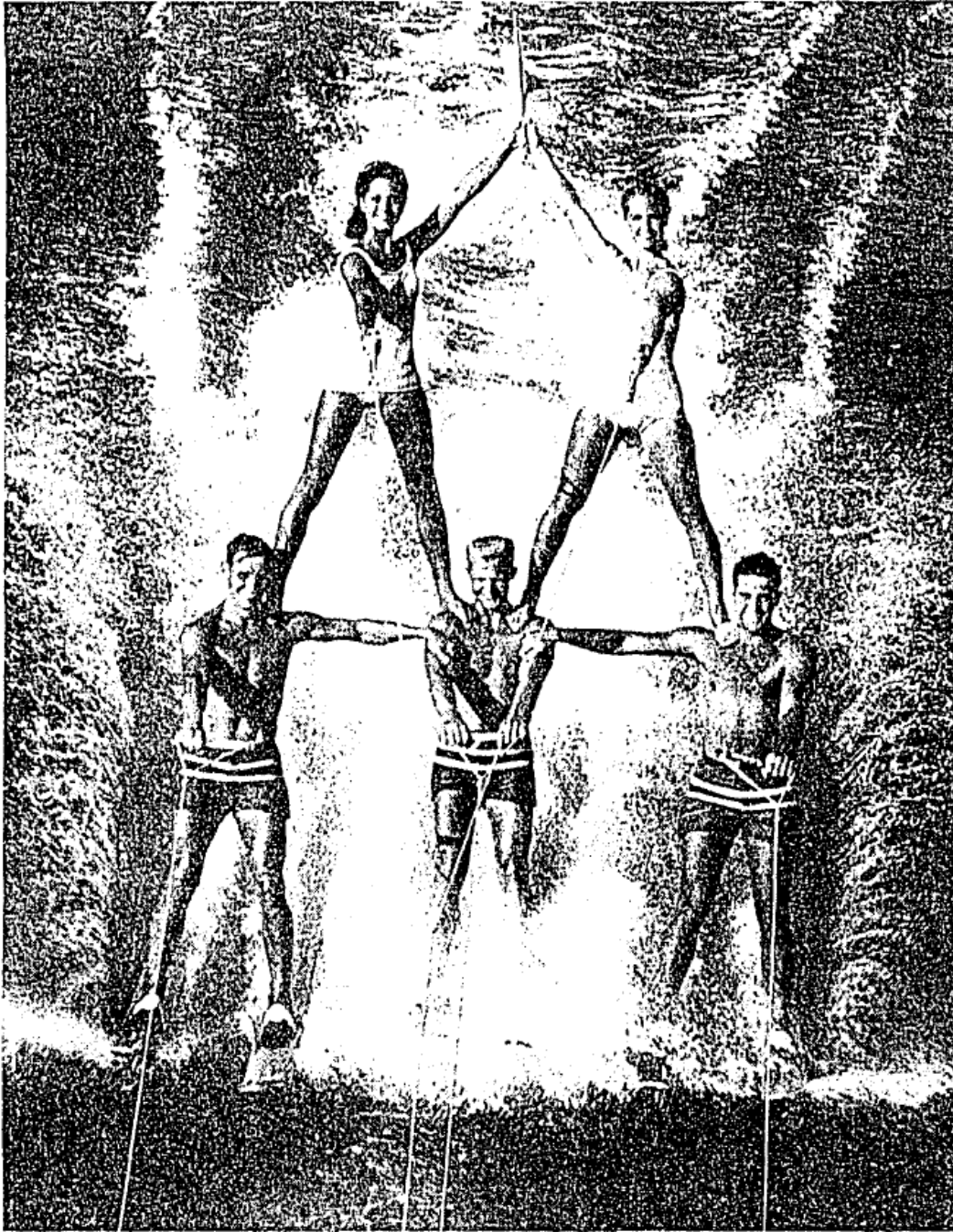
Fiesta Gardens Mercado de México Courtyard Interior
The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Aug 28, 1968



THE TROPICAL GREENHOUSE IS FILLED YEAR ROUND
Plants and citrus fruits flourish around winding stream of water

Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Scenery, Relaxation: Fiesta Gardens Fun for All
The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Aug 28, 1968



AN HOUR SKI SHOW EVERY SUNDAY ATTRACTS CROWDS INTO THE GARDEN'S GRANDSTAND

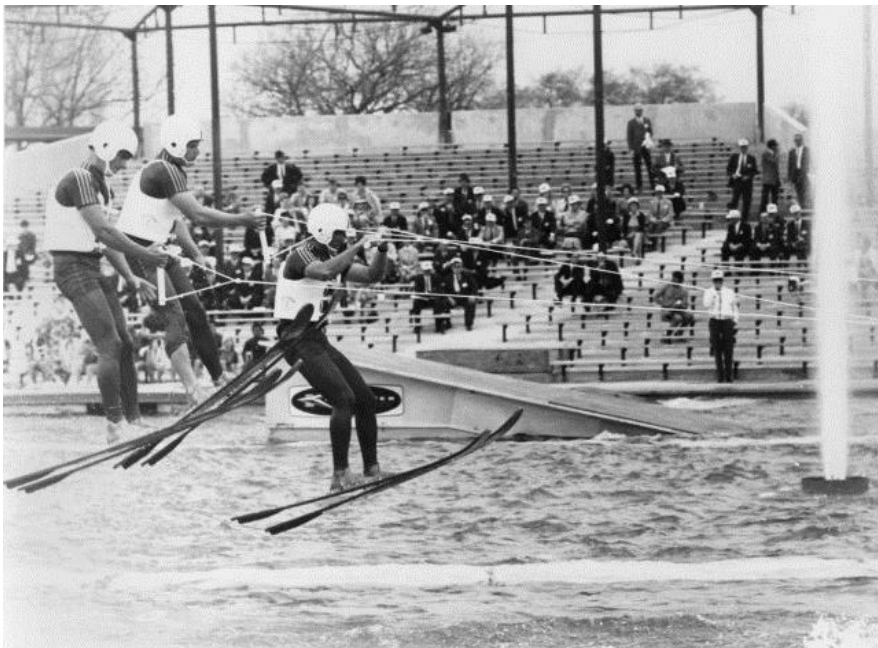
Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

1968 San Antonio HemisFair water ski postcard photo showing Lone Star Brewing Pavilion. UNT, Portal to Texas History.

"The girls of the Mercury Outboard Water Ski Show pass in front of the Lone Star's lakeside Hall of Texas History. The pavilion features realistic life-size dioramas of scenes from Texas' rich history."



Performers at the HemisFair '68 water-ski show which took place in the 3-acre lake at Fiesta Island. UNT, Portal to Texas History.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Austin Parks and Recreation Director Jack Robinson. Fiesta Gardens Dining Hall, December 1967.



Austin Parks and Recreation staff. Fiesta Gardens Dining Hall, December 1967.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Austin Parks and Recreation staff. Fiesta Gardens Dining Hall, December 1967.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

DANDY DECORATIONS

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); May 24, 1972.

DANDY DECORATIONS
The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); May 24, 1972;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman
pg.16



DANDY DECORATIONS — Three Austin beauties were on hand Wednesday to help decorate Fiesta Gardens for "Austin Swings In Spring" frolic nights this weekend. They are, left to right, Linda Cottingham, first runner-up for Miss Austin; Kathy White, Miss Austin Aqua Beauty; and Belle Laning, Miss Highland Lakes. Profits from the two nights of entertainment Friday and Saturday will be donated to flood relief for New Braunfels-Seguin-San Marcos. (Staff Photo by Larry Murphy)

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Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

All current photos by Kristen Hotopp (2019) except as noted.

Photo 1

North exterior façade and entrance on Jesse E. Segovia St.



Photo 2

North exterior façade and entrance on Jesse E. Segovia St.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 3

North exterior stone gate (staff office entrance) on Jesse E. Segovia St. (Photographed by Gregory Smith, 2019)



Photo 4

Dining and Concession Hall interior, facing east.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 5
Dining and Concession Hall interior, wooden ceiling beams with diamond detail.



Photo 6
Dining and Concession Hall interior oblique, facing southwest. (2017)



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 7

South exterior Dining and Concession Hall façade and outdoor patio. (2017)



Photo 8

South exterior Dining and Concession Hall façade detail.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 9

Eastern edge of the lagoon trail overlooking small boat dock, facing south. Dock is noncontributing.



Photo 10

Patio with circular and square planters and stage, facing southwest



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 11
Dining and Concession Hall south exterior façade facing northeast.



Photo 12
Covered stage, facing south.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 13
Planters at interior patio gate, facing north.



Photo 14
Spectator grandstand staircase, facing south.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 15
Spectator grandstand, facing northwest.



Photo 16
Spectator grandstand, facing southeast over lagoon. Photographed by Gregory Smith (2017).



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 17

“Mexican Market” south exterior façade, east wing with gated entryway.



Photo 18

“Mexican Market” south exterior façade with detailed gated entryway and rear patio, facing northeast.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 19

“Mexican Market” south-facing interior courtyard wall with detailed gated entryway.



Photo 20

“Mexican Market” view from arcaded portico overlooking garden courtyard, facing southeast. (2017)



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 21

“Mexican Market” arcaded portico and interior garden courtyard, facing southeast. (2017)



Photo 22

“Mexican Market” arcaded portico, facing west.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 23

“Mexican Market” gated exterior wall (staff office entrance) overlooking interior courtyard, facing south.



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 24

“Mexican Market” north-facing interior garden courtyard with central fountain. (2017)



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 25
“Mexican Market” interior garden courtyard, facing north. (2017)



Photo 26
Johnny Delgado Outdoor Pavilion, facing southeast - Noncontributing. (Photographed by Gregory Smith (2019))



Fiesta Gardens, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Restroom building, facing east. – Noncontributing. Photographed by Gregory Smith (2019)



- End -