



August 18, 2021

Mayor Adler and Austin City Council Members  
Austin City Hall  
301 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

**Re: Convention Center Expansion RFP Recommendations**

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Harper-Madison and Council Members:

The Downtown Austin Alliance represents over 900 downtown property owners and 96,000 employees in the Austin Downtown Public Improvement District. I am writing to provide our recommendations to the Convention Center expansion process. We support the direction provided in [Resolution 20210610-096](#) and want to supply the additional critical and desired outcomes outlined below for the solicitation, procurement and project delivery processes of the Convention Center Expansion. We believe that for this project to be successful, it must be championed by executive leadership within the city and the city council, it must help achieve the City's equity priorities and it must utilize a process that produces the highest quality architectural, urban design and facility performance.

We strongly recommend that the convention center expansion prioritize these critical outcomes:

- Implement the Downtown Austin Vision, The University of Texas at Austin Center for Sustainable Development "Frameworks for Placemaking – Alternative Futures for the Austin Convention District" study and the Waterloo Greenway/Waller Creek Design Plan specifically the Creek Delta Project.
- Ensure the design and function of the Convention Center space serves foremost the needs and demands of the convention, hospitality, and tourism markets.
- Incorporate a creative public-private partnership to achieve the highest and best possible use of the available floor-to-area ratio above the Convention Center.
- Exemplify the most innovative designs from large or internationally renowned cities.
- Create a safe, vibrant pedestrian experience that includes first floor amenities supporting pedestrian activity, retail, and services.

In addition, we believe adhering to the following recommendations will lead to the convention center's success:

- Include inviting uses and spaces for all – including public amenities, where appropriate, that are welcoming to people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities.

- Complement the adjacent Brush Square, Palm Park and Waterloo Greenway in its building form, function, operations, and programming.
- Aid downtown businesses in recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as recommended in the [Roadmap to Recovery and Resilience](#) for downtown Austin.
- Be phased for continuous operation so as not to negatively impact the entertainment and hospitality businesses in downtown Austin.
- Locate main entrance and service areas so that they leverage and enhance adjacent assets, amenities, and pedestrian experience.
- Enhance mobility, access, and connectivity by implementing Great Streets where possible and improving the pedestrian and bicycle experience.
- Open 2nd and 3rd Streets to pedestrian-oriented activities and micro-mobility.
- Integrate with the following projects:
  - Project Connect planned concepts and designs
  - I-35 Cap and Stitch design
  - Palm District Planning Initiative
- Include sustainable and resilient design principles or certifications beyond LEED, such as [WELL](#), [SEED](#), [SITES](#), or other facility and district scale standards.
- Mitigate construction impacts and minimizes disruption during construction
- Use Hotel Occupancy Tax as the sole source of government-provided funding for convention center uses within the project.

The convention center expansion and these recommendations align with the four priorities for downtown Austin identified in the community-driven Downtown Vision: downtown is a thriving center, a welcoming place, a growing neighborhood, and a leader in urban transportation. We appreciate your collaboration and consideration of these critical and recommended outcomes as the convention center project moves forward.

Sincerely,



Dewitt Peart  
President and CEO

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager  
Trisha Tatro, Austin Convention Center Department Director  
Katy Zamesnik, Austin Convention Center Department Acting Chief Administrative Officer