

SUMMARY:

The Austin Convention Center Department (ACCD) is seeking Committee acceptance of the Austin Convention Center's Long-Range Master Plan (Plan) for full Council consideration.

Convention Center staff and its consultants previously presented the ACCD's Plan, which describes and analyzes the need for expansion of the Convention Center facility, assesses several expansion options, and identifies a recommended option.

The Plan is the result of a Council-approved 2014 effort whereby ACCD engaged Gensler, a consultant team, to help develop a plan to address facility needs.

Similarly, per a December 2014 Council resolution (20141211-218), staff was directed to work with the Urban Land Institute (ULI), who assembled a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to assess Gensler's Plan and also provide recommendations regarding expansion of the Convention Center.

August 24, 2015 Presentation Highlights:

- The Tourism & Hospitality industry, which the Convention Center is a part of, has experienced significant growth and success since 1999, and provides various local tax revenues to the City, in the form of hotel occupancy tax (HOT), rental car tax, and sales tax.
- Overview of HOT, including the allocation and collections from 1999-2015 (estimated).
- Overview of Sales Tax estimates contributed to the General Fund by visitors from 2002-2014.
- The Convention Center facility is at practical maximum, experiencing lost business, no longer big enough for current customers, and too small for increased hotel inventory.
- Gensler's work included significant stakeholder involvement, development of several options, in-depth economic and market analysis to support expansion, and recommended an option.
- Non-contiguous expansion to the west is recommended, with added exhibit, meeting, and ballroom space, open/green event space, elements of mixed-use on the site, and enhancement of improvements to area around the facility.
- ULI's TAP reviewed Gensler's report, toured the site, interviewed stakeholders, City staff, and Gensler team, and agreed with Plan conclusion and recommended option.
- Next steps would include determining overall financing strategy, acquiring land, and identifying an owner's representative and/or other third-party financing partnerships.
- Should move forward quickly to obtain land now for expansion—use third-party financing partnership, or other joint venture, if necessary (as opposed to eminent domain, if possible)