

Downtown Austin Community Court/Municipal Building Questions for January 25, 2022 Meeting

The following questions were submitted in advance of a January 25, 2022 Community Meeting hosted by Council Member Tovo. Staff from multiple departments reviewed the questions and prepared the responses offered below. Questions submitted below are unaltered.

I. SELECTION PROCESS

1. **Why is the DACC being relocated from One Texas Center at 505 Barton Springs Road?**

The One Texas Center location is an interim measure of approximately 18-24 months, while a permanent location is identified for DACC operations. DACC needs a permanent facility within the Court's jurisdiction area.

2. **Why was the DACC moved from 719 E. 6th St.?**

This was a leased facility. The landlord was not willing to renew the lease agreement as the building owner plans to redevelop the property.

3. **What is the complete list of criteria considered in selecting a new location for the DACC?**

The facility should be located within DACC's jurisdiction and meet comprehensive DACC space requirements, including sufficient square footage, good access to parking and public transit, space for a courtroom, a jury room, lobby, and administrative and case management offices to accommodate programming needs.

4. **How, and by whom, were these criteria selected?**

The Strategic Facilities Governance Team (SFGT), Real Estate Services, and DACC select the criteria. SFGT evaluates potential sites and makes recommendations accordingly.

5. **Have the site criteria changed given changing needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Protocols and screening processes have changed, but the overall parameters and space needs for the facility did not change as a result of the pandemic.

6. **Is there public / community representation among the group responsible for selecting the new DACC site?**

Administrative facility location selection is managed by City staff.

7. **What part(s) of the City of Austin is the DACC intended to serve?**

DACC's jurisdiction includes downtown, east Austin, and west campus, and is reflected in this [map](#). DACC adjudicates Class C misdemeanor fine only criminal offenses, which does not include traffic or Code offenses. DACC also adjudicates offenses citywide that are related to Proposition B and the State camping ban. Walk-in case management services are available for any individual experiencing homelessness voluntarily seeking assistance.

8. **What is the complete list of sites that were identified as potential locations for the DACC?**

Twenty-seven different sites or buildings were considered for DACC over the past several years, including One Texas Center and Municipal Building (Old City Hall).

1. 505 Barton Springs Rd.
2. 719 E. 6th St.
3. 410 Baylor St.
4. 1201 E. Cesar Chavez St.
5. 1719 E. 2nd St.
6. 522 E. 6th St.
7. 719-723 E 6th St.
8. 3011 N I-35
9. 3218 Manor Rd.
10. 800 Brazos St.

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11. 904 San Antonio St.
12. 1300 Guadalupe St.
13. 93 Red River St.
14. 1100 S I-35
15. 205 Chicon St.
16. 301 W. 5th St.
17. 416 Congress Ave.
18. 210 Barton Springs Rd.
19. 2600 Rosewood Ave.
20. 201 Colorado St.
21. 1021 E. 7th St.
22. 3106 E. 14 1/2 St.
23. 1601 E. 7th St.
24. 800 Guadalupe St., John Henry Faulk Library
25. 124 W. 8th St., Municipal Building (Old City Hall)
26. 700 E. 7th St., Previously Municipal Court
27. 1105 E. Cesar Chavez St., Terrazas Branch

9. **Of those identified locations, how many were considered and rejected?**
We considered all twenty-seven identified locations for DACC. Twenty-five sites or buildings were eliminated for various reasons.
10. **Of those considered and rejected, which criteria were not met?**
Each site or building was analyzed individually as a potential location for DACC. Properties did not meet one or more selection criteria, such as location, distance, space and programming requirements, poor access, limited parking, high lease costs, purchase options, tenant improvement allowance, and renovation costs.
11. **Were any potential locations rejected for reasons outside the identified criteria?**
Yes, due to the space build-out or lease costs.
12. **Why was 1719 E. 2nd St. rejected as a relocation site for the DACC?**
Due to neighborhood opposition.
13. **Why was 700 E. 7th St. rejected as a relocation site for the DACC?**
Due to high renovation and redesign costs.
14. **Which criteria does the proposed location at 124 W. 8th St. meet and which criteria does it not meet?**
The proposed location meets the following criteria: city-owned facility within the Court's jurisdiction area, square footage, transit access, parking availability.
15. **Since questions were raised about 124 W. 8th St. in November 2021 what other sites have been considered?**
One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Rd, and Waller Creek Center, 625 E. 10th Street.
16. **What is the timeline for relocating the DACC to a new location?**
According to the proposed design and construction schedule, approximately 16 to 24 months.
17. **What factors outside of the city's control affect the relocation timeline?**
Building renovations may cause potential delays.
18. **Did the city assess the impact to the neighborhood surrounding the proposed location at 124 W. 8th St.?**
Yes. Please see response to question 19 for more information.

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19. **If so, what was done to perform and document the assessment?**
Based on the experience with DACC operations at its original and current location, it was determined there is no impact to the surrounding neighborhoods. Since its operations approach would not change with the 124 W. 8th Street location, it was determined there would continue to be no impact to surrounding neighborhoods.
20. **Did the city assess the impact to the businesses surrounding the proposed location at 124 W. 8th St.?**
Yes. See response to Question 21 for more information.
21. **If so, what was done to perform and document the assessment?**
Based on the experience with DACC operations at its original and current location, it was determined there is no impact to the surrounding businesses. Since its operations approach would not change with the 124 W. 8th Street location, it was determined there would continue to be no impact to surrounding businesses.
22. **Did the city assess how the relocation will affect hotel tax revenue from businesses in the immediate vicinity?**
Hotel occupancy tax revenue analysis was not conducted.
23. **If so, what was done to perform and document the assessment?**
N/A
24. **Did the city assess the impact of bringing 40 homeless persons per day into the DACC's neighborhood?**
Yes, the City did assess the impact of individuals that will be engaging in court or case management services. To clarify, DACC has a current average of 33 individuals seen daily for walk-in case management and/or walk-in court services. Some, but not all of these individuals are experiencing homelessness. Additionally, this is consistent with the number of individuals experiencing homelessness from DACC's previous location. As noted in responses to questions 19 and 21, based on its experience at its original and current location, there is no impact to the surrounding businesses.
25. **If so, what was done to perform and document the assessment?**
As noted in response to question 19, an assessment was conducted based on experience with DACC operations at its original and current locations. Based on this analysis, there is no anticipated impact to the surrounding neighborhood.
26. **How does the city evaluate the efficacy of the DACC?**
DACC tracks outcomes related to connecting individuals with long-term housing solutions and reducing recidivism.
27. **Does the city track the total number of individuals appearing before the DACC?**
Yes, the City does track the total number of individuals appearing before DACC.
28. **Does the city track the number of individuals repeatedly appearing before the DACC?**
Yes, the City does track the total number of individuals appearing before DACC on multiple occasions.
29. **Does the city track the total number of individuals referred to external services like The Sobering Center?**
DACC and The Sobering Center, among other community partners, have collaborative relationships to make referrals to and from each other as needed. DACC also funds multiple social service contracts to provide wrap around services for individuals engaged in case management including an array of mental health and substance use services, peer support, and several types of short- and long-term housing. DACC tracks performance, including people served, for DACC-funded contracts. Referrals outside of these agreements are tracked in client files for individuals.
30. **Does the city track the total number of individuals repeatedly referred to such external services?**
This information is notated in client files for individuals served.

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31. **What (other) statistics does the city maintain concerning DACC?**
DACC maintains data related to citations and interactions with court services, the number of individuals being served in ongoing case management services, number of requests fulfilled daily for walk-in case management services, and number of individuals connected with long-term housing. DACC also tracks work orders completed by Community Service crews for other City Departments which includes public space cleaning, graffiti abatement, and other beautification projects.
32. **What actions have been taken since November 2021 to address the concerns raised about the relocation?**
Council Member Tovo's office has taken lead on outreach to the surrounding area and held a community engagement session on Tuesday, January 25th.
33. **Has the list of potential sites been revised since quarantine measures may have opened additional space?**
City-owned facilities were re-assessed for consideration.

II. APPROPRIATENESS OF PROPOSED LOCATION

34. **Has the city studied the financial impact and ongoing cost of operating the DACC from an historic building?**
Yes. The renovation will improve the costs associated with operating an historic building.
35. **Was the 124 W. 8th St. initially rejected in 2020 due to the lack of parking and ADA access?**
Parking and ADA access were part of the initial assessment. Since the existing City staff in the Municipal Building will be relocated, the parking needs were resolved. In addition, because of the intended renovation, any ADA access concerns will also be addressed.
36. **If so, how are these concerns now being addressed, and at what cost?**
The current building renovation plan includes parking and ADA access requirements.
37. **How will relocating the DACC to 124 W. 8th St. affect that location's use as a cultural center?**
Proposed cultural uses will be located on different floors and spaces of the building.
38. **Has the city discussed the DACC relocation with any of the cultural organizations affected thereby?**
As noted in the responses to questions 19 and 21, the DACC operates Monday through Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm and has low foot traffic of 33 individuals served daily on average. Based on operational experience at its previous and current location, there would not be a significant impact to cultural organizations or other nearby locations. There were no additional discussions with cultural organizations nearby.
39. **If so, what feedback has the city received and, if not, why not?**
See response to Question #38.
40. **What external facilities (e.g., The Sobering Center Austin) are used / recommended by the DACC?**
DACC currently funds and makes referrals to social service organizations through direct contracts to provide services for individuals engaged in DACC case management services, which includes A New Entry, Integral Care, Communities for Recovery, Family Eldercare, Foundation Communities, Front Steps, and The Other Ones Foundation. DACC also makes and receives referrals from an array of other community organizations, based on each individual's needs for services. This may include organizations such as CommUnityCare Clinics, the University of Texas Counseling Center, and other medical, mental health, and basic needs service providers that would be helpful for anyone engaging with DACC which also includes students and adults with access to health insurance.
41. **Where are each of these external facilities located relative to the proposed location at 124 W. 8th St.?**
DACC's partners are located throughout the community.

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42. **How does the city anticipate that homeless individuals will reach these external facilities?**
Individuals reach services through all typical modes of transportation including walking, public transit, and in vehicles owned by themselves or others. In some cases, individuals participating in ongoing case management may be provided transportation to certain appointments by DACC case management staff.
43. **By percentage, how do those appearing before the DACC arrive there?**
This data is not collected by DACC.
44. **Are individuals transported to the DACC returned to the locations from which they were transported?**
We do not typically transport individuals to DACC. The vast majority of individuals coming to DACC for court and/or case management services arrive and leave on their own.
45. **If not, what does the city anticipate these individuals will do once they leave the DACC?**
As with any public service provided by the City, DACC does not track where individuals go after they are done engaging in services onsite. Typically, when individuals finish their visit with DACC they do not remain on or near the premises. For historical context, DACC has not received any neighborhood complaints or seen any new encampments in the area since we opened operations at One Texas Center in August 2021.
- III. PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY**
46. **Did the city assess the need for additional security in the vicinity of the DACC and, if not, why not?**
Once we have design drawings to review, we will coordinate with APD and conduct an assessment to design a security posture that meets the DACC/Municipal Building needs with the community in mind.
47. **Are there specific plans for increased police presence in the vicinity of the DACC?**
If there is a need, we will bring on more security and APD or Marshall Service if approved.
48. **If so, from where will these resources be drawn?**
First choice would be APD as resources are available. However, if the Marshall Service is in place, we will utilize that service.
49. **What specific procedure exists for reporting complaints related to the DACC or persons appearing before it?**
To date, DACC has not received complaints regarding patrons seeking services onsite. Individuals may call DACC directly and express their concerns, and DACC management will follow up directly with those constituents who have concerns. In addition, individuals may call 3-1-1 and the concern will be directed to DACC for follow-up.
50. **What statistics does the city maintain concerning such complaints?**
Since DACC has not received complaints to date, neither DACC nor 3-1-1 have any data regarding complaints. 3-1-1 does maintain a record of calls and requests, and all public records that would reflect complaints are maintained by DACC in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act.
51. **What is the process for making a complaint about the homeless generally?**
Individuals with complaints and/or service requests can call Austin 3-1-1 for appropriate routing. Austin 3-1-1 categorizes homelessness calls into service requests that are directed to the appropriate departments. As stated above, when DACC receives inquiries, they are received by the Court Administrator who oversees follow-up for each request.

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52. **What statistics does the city maintain concerning such complaints?**
Because citizens and stakeholders express concerns about homelessness through a wide variety of avenues (3-1-1 calls, calls to specific departments, council office contacts, etc.), there is no single tracking mechanism for such interactions. Analysis of 3-1-1 calls may be possible but would provide an incomplete picture of contacts received.
53. **Austin is currently observing Stage 5 COVID-19 guidelines; how does this impact the DACC?**
DACC continues to provide case management services throughout the pandemic without interruption. DACC follows all safety protocols recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Austin Public Health (APH), including social distancing and masking. Temperatures for all staff and guests are checked before entering the facility. Most individuals that are receiving ongoing case management services are seen in the community at the location of their choice, which often provides the opportunity to conduct meetings outdoors. This is a best practice for services and building trust with those we serve, and also reduces foot traffic at our facility.
- DACC's Community Service Restitution (CSR) crews allow for individuals to complete public service hour requirements through public space cleaning and beautification projects throughout the community. Since CSR projects require transporting participants to work sites, it is only open to public participants when Austin is at Stage 3 or lower for COVID.
- In recognition of the current public health concerns for transmission of COVID-19, DACC has created additional options to resolve court cases including online virtual dockets in addition to in-person dockets.
54. **How will the DACC observe / enforce Stage 5 COVID-19 guidelines?**
DACC conducts temperature screenings, requires mask use, monitors for symptoms, requires social distancing and frequently disinfects common areas; DACC has also placed plastic shielding in high traffic areas. DACC will also continue to observe all COVID safety guidelines recommended by the CDC and APH.
55. **Will the DACC determine the vaccination status of those appearing before it?**
Per Texas Executive Order GA-39 (found [here](#)), no government entity can require an individual to provide proof of vaccination. However, all guests and staff are screened for symptoms before entering the building.
56. **Will the DACC determine the COVID-19 infection status of those appearing before it?**
No, but all guests and staff are screened for symptoms before entering the building.
57. **Will the number of individuals appearing before the DACC be limited by the Stage 5 guidelines?**
The areas open to the public for services are configured to ensure social distancing, allowing for people to participate in court and case management services while complying with COVID safety guidelines. As stated in a previous response, case management services have continued uninterrupted throughout the pandemic. There has been some reduction in individuals coming to resolve cases in person since the online virtual docket option was implemented. Community Service Restitution will reopen for participants when the community is at Stage 3 for COVID-19 and can be conducted in compliance with guidance from the CDC and the Local Health Authority. Recommended safety protocols will continue to be followed by DACC guests and staff.
58. **If so, where will individuals not permitted inside the DACC be located and, if not, why not?**
If someone is identified as having symptoms during the screening process before entering DACC, we provide information on where they can be tested for COVID-19 and make every attempt to help coordinate transportation to a testing site.
59. **Does the city track the vaccination status of its homeless population generally?**

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Austin Public Health and its community partners continue to make assertive efforts to increase vaccination rates among persons experiencing homelessness. However, there are numerous healthcare providers and an individual's vaccine status is protected health information, therefore comprehensive tracking is not feasible at this time.

60. **Does the city consider its homeless population "high-risk" or "low-risk" in terms of applying guidelines?**
The question is unclear as to what guidelines are referenced. We know that people experiencing homelessness are disproportionately impacted by chronic conditions that make them at higher risk for poor outcomes if infected by COVID. Connection to services like those offered by DACC increase access to primary care, vaccinations, and other preventive measures that mitigate these risks.
61. **What sanitary facilities are available to individuals appearing before the DACC during operating hours?**
Personal protective equipment (PPE), hand sanitizer, and public restrooms are available for all guests inside the facility. As noted previously, DACC follows CDC and APH COVID safety guidelines, has installed plastic shielding in high traffic areas, conducts temperature screenings, requires mask use, monitors for symptoms, requires social distancing, and frequently disinfects common areas to keep the area safe for guests and staff.
62. **What sanitary facilities are available to individuals appearing before the DACC outside operating hours?**
Based on DACC's operations and services, access to sanitary facilities before and after operating hours is not provided by DACC.
63. **If none, how does the city anticipate the need for sanitary facilities will be met?**
Based on current operations, which will continue at any new location, DACC anticipates that the sanitary facilities provided during business hours will meet the needs for individuals engaging in the DACC services.
64. **What precautions is the city taking to ensure the health of those who live and work near the DACC?**
The health of our entire community is a priority for the City. The programs and services provided through the DACC increase access to primary care, vaccinations, and other preventive measures that mitigate health impacts among those experiencing homelessness. Community precautions apply to all residents and businesses throughout the Austin/Travis County area. Residents and employees should follow the [health and safety guidelines](#) established by our local health authority.
65. **What precautions is the city taking to ensure the physical safety of those who live and work near the DACC?**
As a court of law, certain security measures are required and will be in place. Security resources that are in place at DACC's current location will continue at the new location, and include:
- Austin Police Department (APD) presence to provide armed security within the courtroom.
 - Unarmed contracted security oversee the building, parking garage, and grounds.
 - Anyone entering the facility is prohibited from bringing firearms or other weapons into the building and will be screened through a metal detector.
 - Visitors' personal items will also be screened through an x-ray machine, similar to current operations at City Hall and the Austin Municipal Court.