



DOWNTOWN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20240221-003

Date: February 21, 2024

Subject: Austin Convention Center Expansion

Recommendation

The Downtown Commission recommends that Austin City Council adopt the Music Commission recommendation that directs Convention Center Staff to create a Convention Center Expansion Advisory Board, consisting of stakeholders from the art, music, and other relevant communities and industries, to provide critical input for expansion planning. **We further recommend that the Austin City Council direct the Music Commission to include a member of the Downtown Commission, to be chosen by the Downtown Commission Chairman, on the Convention Center Expansion Advisory Board.**

Description of Recommendation to Council

Convention Center staff has announced plans for a comprehensive public information campaign for the expansion. As part of this public outreach, the Downtown Commission recommends that an advisory board be formed to provide community insight for this significant downtown project.

Precedent is set by the South-Central Waterfront redevelopment, I-35 expansion, and Project Connect anti-displacement initiative – current public projects which benefit from project-specific community advisory boards or committees. This motion is based on study and recommendation from the Joint Arts & Music Urban Core Land Use Working Group.

Rationale:

- The convention center expansion will be financed by over \$1 billion in public funds
- The Convention Center expansion is a landmark capital project with tremendous potential for public benefits to Austin, including increased tourism revenue, exceptional public spaces, and robust programming.
- City of Austin Music and Cultural grant programs are funded by Hotel Occupancy Taxes, which are directly impacted by Convention Center operations.
- The adjacent publicly owned Palm School parcel holds significant historic and cultural importance, especially to Austin's Latinx community.
- The Convention Center should set itself apart and above competing facilities by leveraging and strengthening Austin's status as a thriving mecca for creativity, arts, music, and diverse culture.
- Stakeholder input from Austin's diverse communities will enhance expansion planning vision and help the new Austin Convention Center become unique world-class destination attracting visitors from across the US and the world.

Vote

For: 7 (Chair Harris, Vice Chair Ishmael, Commissioners Weaver, Coufal, Major, Levinson and Shifferd)

Against: 0