

TO: Mayor and Austin City Council
FROM: Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board
DATE: March 25, 2026
SUBJECT: Support for Funding Value-Engineered Items and Staffing – ESB-MACC Phase 2

Dear Mayor and Members of the Austin City Council,

On behalf of the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC) Advisory Board, we write to express our strong support for key investments needed to ensure the successful completion and long-term operation of the Phase 2 expansion.

First, we recommend that City Council approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget for the ESB-MACC as it will be presented by staff. This includes support for an increased operating budget proportionate to the expanded size, scope, and utilization of the facility, as allowable. Ensuring that operational funding scales appropriately with the facility's growth is essential to fully activate the space and deliver high-quality programming, maintenance, and community services.

We further urge the inclusion and funding of the value-engineered (VE) items associated with the Phase 2 expansion in the City of Austin's upcoming annual budget.

As outlined in the January 5, 2024 memorandum provided by the Parks and Recreation Department (attached for reference to the detailed VE items and estimated costs), approximately \$6 million in construction scope was removed from the Phase 2 project through value engineering processes. While these reductions were necessary to align with prior budget constraints, they represent critical components that directly impact the functionality, accessibility, cultural relevance, and long-term sustainability of the facility.

Importantly, the Phase 2 design reflects extensive public comment and community input gathered over multiple years. The elements that were value-engineered out are not incidental—they are directly tied to the community-informed vision for what this cultural center should be. As such, restoring these components through future funding is not only a matter of project completion, but of honoring the voices, priorities, and expectations of the Austin community.

The deferred items include, but are not limited to:

- Auditorium and lobby renovations essential for community programming and performances
- Black Box theater upgrades, including projection, lighting, and sound improvements
- Expansion of parking capacity to better accommodate visitors and large-scale events
- Modern wayfinding systems, including digital kiosks and directories
- Rehabilitation of restrooms and upgrades to public-facing infrastructure

- Acoustical treatments and gallery enhancements to preserve the integrity of exhibitions
- Solar panel installation to advance the City's sustainability goals
- Landscape improvements and irrigation systems that support environmental stewardship
- Playground and cultural engagement features, including musical components

Collectively, these enhancements are foundational to delivering a fully realized cultural center that meets the needs of Austin's diverse and growing population. Without them, the facility risks operating below its intended capacity and community impact.

We also note that project costs are expected to escalate by more than 5% annually, with additional soft costs potentially exceeding \$2 million if these items are deferred further. From both a fiscal and strategic perspective, advancing these investments in the next budget cycle is the most prudent course of action.

In addition to capital investments, the Board emphasizes the critical need to fund staffing positions required to support the expanded facility. Current requests outline essential roles that remain unfunded but are necessary for effective operations and programming, including:

1. **Technical Support (IT Support Specialist)** – to support rehearsals, performances, and participant needs without overextending current staff (approximately \$95,052 annually)
2. **Marketing Support (Culture and Arts Education Specialist)** – to ensure effective promotion, audience development, and program visibility across exhibits, events, and artist programs (approximately \$106,331 annually)
3. **Operations Support (Culture and Arts Education Supervisor)** – to manage building operations and oversee facility logistics for a significantly expanded campus (approximately \$95,052 annually)
4. **Development Support (Business Process Consultant)** – to strengthen fundraising capacity, partnerships, and resource development, including external funding opportunities (approximately \$106,331 annually)

These positions represent core operational capacity—not optional enhancements. Without them, the City risks underutilizing its capital investment and placing unsustainable strain on existing staff. Funding these roles ensures that the ESB-MACC can operate at scale, deliver high-quality programming, and remain accessible and responsive to the community it serves.

The ESB-MACC is a vital cultural hub that preserves and celebrates Mexican American and Latino arts, history, and community life in Austin. Fully funding both the VE items and the necessary staffing ensures that the City upholds its commitment to cultural equity, community investment, and the original vision shaped by community input.

The Advisory Board respectfully urges the Austin City Council to prioritize and allocate funding for these value-engineered items and associated staffing needs in the upcoming budget. Doing so will safeguard the integrity of the project, honor community vision, maximize prior investments, and ensure that the ESB-MACC operates as a world-class cultural institution for generations to come.

Thank you for your leadership and continued support.

Sincerely,

Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board



TO: Emma S. Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board Members

FROM: City of Austin, Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: January 5, 2024

SUBJECT: December Board Meeting Follow-Up

During the December 6, 2023 ESB MACC Advisory Board several requests were made for additional information regarding the Phase 2 project. In response, please see the information provided below and notify the project team if additional information is needed.

Request #1: A list of value engineered items, prioritized, with associated costs

Response: The following spreadsheet lists all the items that have been value engineered from the Phase 2 project since the 2018 plan. Associated costs have been provided for items not currently being priced as part of GMP 2. GMP 2 costs are currently in a contract negotiation phase and are subject to non-disclosure clauses at this time and are therefore listed as “unavailable” below. These costs can be provided after GMP2 has been executed. The estimated construction cost of all value engineered items listed below, including those subject to non-disclosure, is \$6,000,000. This estimated construction cost does not include any associated soft costs, contingency, overhead, profit, escalation, etc which could increase the overall cost significantly. The method and timeframe used to implement these VE items at a later date can have large impacts on the cost. Escalation is expected to add more than 5% cost each year, and soft costs to implement all these items could add over \$2 million to the construction cost.

ESB-MACC Phase 2 Project - List of Value-Engineered Items				
Item #	VE Phase when Item was Cut	Approx. Cost	Area	VE Description
1	100% DD	\$52,000	Zocalo	Install stage
2	90% GMP2	Unavailable	Auditorium & Lobby	Complete Auditorium & Lobby Renovation
3	100% DD	\$40,000	Black Box	New projector & screen, lighting, sound
4	2018 Plan	\$1,353,000	Parking	Additional 60 surface parking stalls constructed in overflow parking area
5	Unknown	\$129,000	Wayfinding	Digital Kiosks & Additional Directories
6	90% GMP2	Unavailable	Renovation	PA system Upgrade

7	Schematic design	\$28,000	Black Box	Upgrade speakers in Black Box, dressing room and restroom. Include integrated speakers in existing classrooms & add speakers to Raul Salinas Room.
8	100% DD	\$88,000	Gallery	Acoustical treatment, Reduce noise from HVAC
9	100% DD	\$175,000	Gallery	Verisol fabric shade on existing skylights
10	Unknown	\$130,000	Restrooms	Rehab all existing restrooms
11	IGMP	\$126,000	Central Stair	Rehab existing central stair w/glass ceiling
12	90% GMP2	Unavailable	Landscaping	Install 40% reduced trail area
13	90% GMP2	Unavailable	Landscaping	Reduced plant & tree sizes and reduced planting areas
14	100% DD	\$86,000	Classrooms	Convert existing classrooms into offices
14	IGMP	\$362,000	Landscaping	Condensate Water Reuse for Irrigation
15	90% GMP2	Unavailable	Playground	Installation of metal musical components
15	Schematic design	\$207,000	Solar Panels	Install approx. 9,000 SF solar panel array per 2019 PEA
16	90% GMP2	Unavailable	Monument Sign	Additional front entrance monument sign
\$6,000,000			Total Estimated Construction Cost related to VE items (Does not include soft costs or escalation cost factors)	

Request #2: A list of alternates included in the project, prioritized with associated costs.

Response: The VE list provided in response to request #1 is not a prioritized list. The only prioritization of potential VE items are the items included as alternates in GMP #2. We cannot provide costs associated with these items because GMP #2 is currently in contract negotiations and is subject to non-disclosure clauses at this time. These costs can be provided after GMP2 has been executed. According to the specifications provided with the 100% CDs for GMP2 the list of alternates are prioritized in the following order:

1. Alternate No. 01: Provide appliances in Teaching Kitchen 100 & Pantry 100.1
2. Alternate No. 02: Provide acoustical panels at Dance Studio 102, Music A 103.4 & Music B 103.2
3. Alternate No. 03: Provide TVs/monitors and mounts (interior and exterior)
4. Alternate No. 04: Provide appliances at Open Office 121, Backstage 153, Utility 130.1 & Staff 231.2
5. Alternate No. 05: Provide site furnishings and play equipment at playground area
6. Alternate No. 06: Re-roof areas A-1 & A-2

7. Alternate No. 07: Re-roof areas C-1 & C-2
8. Alternate No. 08: Re-roof area D-1

Request #3: A date on when the bidding and negotiation phase will be complete in order to share the costs associated with lists from items #1 & #2.

Response: We anticipate completion of the bidding and negotiation phase before the end of January 2024.

Request #4: A set of floor plans and/or presentation showing how the Phase 2 project has changed.

Response: While the target date to provide these was at the end of December, it was contingent on receiving an approved building permit from Development Services Division (DSD). Once we receive approved plans from DSD a presentation showing the Phase 2 project will be shared with the board.

Request #5: Can we have a breakdown of costs expended to date? Architectural fees, construction costs, etc.

Response: Below is a breakdown of costs expended to the date of January 4, 2024. These do not represent the total amounts contracted towards these services.

\$361,877.64	CMAR Costs (Rogers-O'Brien)
\$3,216,591.80	Architectural and Engineering Consulting Service Fees
\$48,350.76	Testing (Geotechnical, Construction Testing, Hazardous Materials)
\$59,318.76	Art in Public Spaces
\$888.00	Other Services (Printing, Translation, Etc)
\$1,103,723.51	Interdepartmental Management, Inspection, and Project Fees
\$4,790,750.47	TOTAL

Request #6: Clarify the difference between Construction End in Fall 2025 and Grand Opening Summer 2025.

Response: The Grand Opening may occur sometime between the project's substantial completion and final completion. Substantial completion is when the facility is deemed ready to be occupied by the owner, but other minor work still needs to be completed by the contractor. The exact date or alignment of the Grand Opening will not be known until construction has significantly progressed. The anticipated project completion timeline is:

1. Substantial Completion (estimated Summer 2025)
2. Grand Opening (estimated Fall 2025)