

Convention Center Design Amendments

The convention experience of today is more than a building; it is the authentic experience of a city. More visitors than ever are forgoing cars in favor of a completely walkable convention experience. Austin needs a new model for a convention center — one that adds to instead of subtracting from the vibrancy and connectivity of its surroundings. An expansion of the convention center should minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on the city which supports it.

Therefore, we recommend:

1. The costs of expanding the Convention Center should be met in part by integrating the expansion with other uses, such as residential or office. This would benefit the convention center and the city by ensuring that the surrounding area is active at times when no conventions are taking place.
2. The city should issue a Request for Information for integrating the expansion of the Convention Center with other uses that would contribute to street activity and a healthy urban fabric in downtown's southeast quadrant while maintaining the city's intact street grid and valuable land and development on the property tax rolls for the benefit of the entire City.
3. The Convention Center expansion should be used to repair the urban framework in the immediate vicinity of the convention center. Improvements should include those described in the Waller Creek Conservancy vision for the Convention Center area as well as pedestrian connections between the Convention Center and the Rainey Street neighborhood.
4. Through the Waller Creek Tax Increment Financing District and/or a similar mechanism, additional property tax revenues from the expansion should be considered to address urgent social problems in this area of downtown.

