

How Can We Make Tourism Help Our City the Most?

Closed May 12, 2017 · Discussion · 27 Participants · 3 Topics · 69 Answers · 35 Replies · 19 Votes

27

PARTICIPANTS

3

TOPICS

69

ANSWERS

35

REPLIES

19

VOTES

SUMMARY OF TOPICS

TOURISTS' CHALLENGING IMPACTS 4 Answers · 1 Replies

What are some of the greatest challenges posed by tourism and tourists?

Seth Goodman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 25, 2017 10:44 pm

 0 Votes

Tourists + rental cars = sad Austinites

Tourists are at their worst when they are driving. Many Americans are most likely to use transit, walk, and bike while they are on vacation. We should be encouraging that to the greatest extent possible.

Tourists are also a problem when they become concentrated in too small of a space. Around the convention center, we have started to create a quarter of the city that is exclusively hotels, chain restaurants aimed at catering to the lowest common denominator of taste, parking, and of course the convention center itself. Austinites generally avoid this area because it feels sterile, lacks diversity of uses, and because giant ballrooms filled with this year's hottest trends in tile and carpet are nobody's idea of a good time. It shows when there's no convention on because the streets around the convention center become a dead zone. In order for tourists to have the positive impact on the local economy that is often boasted, they need to get out and spread out and that means we should distribute hotels more evenly around the walkable parts of town.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 9:55 am

Thanks for your comments, Seth! -Moderator

Tim Altanero · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 29, 2017 1:50 am

 1 Votes

I don't mind tourists at all.

We are addressing the hotel room shortage downtown pretty well, I think.

What's problematic - and this is not caused by tourists - is the lack of viable public transport. Running more busses is fine, in theory, but they are in traffic too.

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We need to think about the city longterm and invest in that longterm future. Yes, it will cost, but if you think about what you pay for your car every year, and how much time you spend in traffic, adding a small tax to fund subway and commuter rail would remove probably most of those "annoying" tourists from the roads.

I don't know about you but I certainly hate to drive and don't relish having to do that in a new city. Rather take public transport.

A bit off-topic but does anyone ride the "red" line? If you do, you know that it is SRO (standing room only) during peak commuter times.

We've had that line for several years but we never address the problem (or its high cost) - the train is a "toy" to move a couple of people around. It is not meant for people to commute and thus should be shut or re-examined such that it serves us as commuter rail instead of the "fun" "light rail" term we currently use.

It's absolutely infuriating that when the train arrives at even just Howard during commute times, you may not even be able to get in! And then you wait another 30 minutes for the next and get dinged at work for being late?

God help you if you want to use the train below Howard during commute times.

Point being - what we have already is not being used effectively or expanded. And what we want probably won't happen at all if we can't get what we have now right in the face of obvious - and easily fixable - transport issues.

Natalie Hulsey · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 29, 2017 6:26 pm

 0 Votes

I am reiterating what some have said above in regards to transportation issues as one of the greatest challenges for tourists. It is unfortunate that more metro rail has not been voted in--costly but in the long run I believe would be used by tourists and Austinites alike. The problem with former proposals is that the initial routes just went where buses already go. We need to have established corridors (like many major cities--Atlanta, Chicago, etc.) that run north to south and east (from airport) to west, then later adding on routes that are northwest to northeast and southwest to southeast. The city also needs to work on better advertising or gaining back more recognizable ride sharing companies. We have local ones, but tourists are looking for Uber and Lyft which have been marketed well and with which they are familiar. Ride and Fare could do with better advertising to educate tourists.

Another challenge faced by tourists is affordable places to stay that are close to public transport. Perhaps during peak volume times there could be more incentive for citizens of Austin (lower tax rate to the city from what they rent on certain weekends or weeks) to rent out a room in their home or their entire home using platforms such as Airbnb and Homeaway in order to help with affordability. Yes, this would take away from some hotels, but this gives tourists more options on where they can stay and they will pump money into our city's economy either way.

HOW TOURISTS HELP

 18 Answers · 9 Replies

In what ways can tourism and tourists help improve your life as an Austinite?

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Seth Goodman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 25, 2017 10:28 pm

👍 1 Votes

Tourists make Austin come alive. They contribute to our street life and spend money in our local stores and restaurants. Tourists are at their best when they are out and about walking, biking, and exploring Austin and all it has to offer.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 9:54 am
Thanks for your comments, Seth! -Moderator

camille smith · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 10:43 am

👍 0 Votes

Service industry workers typically benefit from tourists during big events like ACL or SXSW but this year many servers etc. did not make the same amount they have in previous years, I think this has to do with over saturation. Additionally, there was more violence than in previous years. These events, in my opinion are out of control and the benefit does not outweigh the cost

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 11:14 am
Thanks for those comments, Camille! Any suggestions about how the City might leverage hotel occupancy tax dollars to address these issues? -Moderator

Dick Ryan · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 12:12 pm

👍 0 Votes

It's fun meeting tourists and sharing our music, film, art and other cultural events with them. I especially like to meet the foreign tourists and I've noticed collecting money for HAAM at The Waterloo during SXSW, that they are the ones dropping the big bucks in the box.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 1:00 pm
Thanks for your comments, Dick! -Moderator

Denise Prince · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 2:33 pm

👍 1 Votes

Because of the impact tourists have adding to increased congestion I'd like to see their tax dollars spent in ways that allow the city to stop nickel and diming the residents. By this I mean, keeping parking in parks free all year, returning some of the free parking (yes, there used to be a lot of free parking even downtown. It has mostly disappeared along with so many spaces being turned into valet, etc. Austin has taken a shift towards seeming out to squeeze everyone. If tourists are able to offset some costs the city could go back to feeling friendly. I can't overstate the cost to the soul of the city of the "just

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get used to it" reduction in quality of life caused by the seeming greed of City Hall. As an artist who applies for Cultural Arts Division grants and has received 5 I hope I am not suggesting the part of the hotel occupancy tax be pulled from funding for the arts. I just know many people who don't feel the same about Austin anymore and when asked it always comes back to the increasing costs of living here and feeling like everyone is trying to squeeze every last penny out of everyone else. Help take the pressure off so artists and musicians can afford to stay local.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:19 pm
Thanks for your comments and clarifications, Denise! -Moderator

Kate Knight · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 2:54 pm

👍 1 Votes

Tourists are a big portion of Austin's income. They come to meet and create with other artists(musicians, painters, actors), for education enrichment as exchange students(met several flying back home to Austin), pensioners, people from other places in the states looking for a change of scenery, festival seekers and supporters, travelers passing through, business innovators and builders etc..ALL of these groups tend to use our hotels. The tax fees they pay from their hotel stays and the money they spend for food, entertainment etc...could be used to transform our downtown area into the kind of place where they could walk, hike and bike instead of adding their rental cars to our already badly congested roadways.

Trails, sidewalks, skyways...all these could help with the human traffic issues and make it safer for ALL of us to walk around town. I'm referring to the time several people were struck by a moving vehicle during a past SXSW festival. Tragic. We are already a highly educated and multicultural city. People know this and come here from all parts of the planet. We're enriched from their interactions with us. It's a win win.

We desperately need to address the traffic and safety issues that the increase in people has already brought to our beautiful city. Revenue would be well spent in reducing over crowded and unsafe roads and highways.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:19 pm
Thanks for your comments, Kate--any more specific suggestions on improvements around downtown? Like specific streets, routes, etc.? -Moderator

Glenn Gurgiolo · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 2:57 pm

👍 1 Votes

The fact that Austin is a tourist destination is a tribute to our vibrant city and way of life. I believe we should do more to educate our visitors in local etiquette. The city has done a great job of communicating we "don't block the box". One way we can attack the affordability issue is to let everyone know that in Austin we "always tip the band". A simple PR campaign could accent this point. Imagine a billboard on I-35 with the simple statement. AUSTIN - Where there's music in the cafés at night and everybody tips the band. Thoughts?

Response:

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Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:20 pm
Interesting suggestion, Glenn! -Moderator

Barbara Scott · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 8:53 pm
👍 0 Votes

Only certain parts of Austin benefit from tourist dollars, we need to find a way to let these dollars help other parts of town.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:20 pm
Thanks for your suggestion! Do you have ideas of how to make that happen?
-Moderator

David Scally Jr. · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 27, 2017 8:30 am
👍 0 Votes

during ACL & SXSW I hear a lot of negative reporting and conversation about "don't go out anywhere because it's too crowded on the streets and highways" and thus the locals stay home. Actually the only crowding I personally witnessed was in the locality of the venue sites, and the traffic was impeccably well controlled and regulated in my opinion (I would know I used to live in LA). I think taking some of that negative publicity out of the media and advertising that we make special plans for traffic routing as a tourist destination are two bullet points I would like to see focused on. Tourist money is absolutely pure gravy for any city - never under estimate that!

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:20 pm
Thanks for your comments, David. -Moderator

David Aronofsky · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 27, 2017 8:31 pm
👍 0 Votes

Making Austin tourism-friendly benefits everyone who lives here so more and better mass transportation. Getting rid of Uber and Lyft, in hindsight, was a very bad idea because it is so popular with visitors who prefer to use these services rather than rent cars to add to the traffic congestion. I supported the city position with my vote but I would go the other way based on the visitor complaints I have heard, so stop opposing what the Legislature is about to do. As noted, more and better mass transportation where visitors go. Free bus service downtown might help.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:21 pm
Thanks for those comments, David. -Moderator

SPENDING TOURISTS' TAX CONTRIBUTIONS  47 Answers ·

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25 Replies

In what ways could hotel occupancy taxes be spent that would make our city a better place to live, work, and play?

Seth Goodman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 25, 2017 10:24 pm

👍 3 Votes

1. You can tell when there's a major festival going on in town because there is a huge increase in the number of people walking around central Austin. Unfortunately, the sidewalk infrastructure isn't up to the task of handling the extra foot traffic in many areas, especially around Auditorium Shores and Zilker Park as well as near UT's stadia and many parts of Downtown. People spill out into the street, walk through parking lots, and lack shade trees. The HOT could be used to greatly improve sidewalks leading to major gathering spaces in a way that would enhance safety, the visitor experience, and the city for Austinites all year round.
2. Motorized transport also is a problem during festivals and at all times of the year. A downtown circulator shuttle is badly needed to reduce reliance on rideshares and taxis and to generally reduce car trips. Circulators work best when they are free to use so that people can hop on and hop off quickly. HOT funds could be used to fund a circulator route that connects major tourist attractions in central Austin while also distributing commuters from the Guadalupe/Lavaca bus lanes and the Red Line.
3. Finally, it's no secret that one of Austin's main tourist attractions is our arts community, yet many of the talented professionals who bring so much tourism money to Austin take home very little of it for themselves. HOT funds would be well spent supporting the performing and visual artists without whom much of the funds would not exist. As much as possible, these funds should benefit local artists directly, either through hiring or commissioning their work, or through new subsidized housing in central Austin.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 9:55 am
Thanks for your comments, Seth! They are in line with some of what the Task Force has discussed. -Moderator

camille smith · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 10:46 am

👍 0 Votes

I agree that the people who make Austin most unique are no longer able to afford to live here. If Austin wants to maintain the intrigue that brings people here, it needs to address housing affordability or else it will just turn into Dallas. No offense Dallas.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 11:06 am
Thanks for your comments, Camille! Can you think of ways the City could use hotel occupancy taxes to make Austin more affordable? -Moderator

Dick Ryan · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 12:29 pm

👍 0 Votes

Two areas are to help maintain our Parks and our Historic Resources - both used by

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tourists and residents alike.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 1:00 pm
Thanks for those comments, Dick; the Task Force has taken up those two items in great detail. -Moderator

Steve Busti · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 1:28 pm

👍 3 Votes

I highly recommend investing the money into at least two manned and mobile public restrooms, not only for the tourists, but also for Austin's growing homeless and transient downtown population. Anyone who has been downtown, especially around the 6th Street and Red River Entertainment district (Austin's hub of tourism), can see and smell how bad the public urination and defecation has become, particularly in the alleys. It has not only become a public health hazard, but it also is one of the first impressions tourist get of the city since these are the areas where most tourists visit when they first arrive.

I advocate for a 24-hr manned mobile public restroom model similar to that adopted by San Francisco's Tenderloin District, which has proven to be very successful. Here's a link for more info: <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-sf-mobile-toilets-20150127-story.html>

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 2:28 pm
Thanks for those comments, Steve! There actually is a pilot program in the works for that. -Moderator

Trey Farmer · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 2:06 pm

👍 2 Votes

This is copied from another post I put up about it:

"Basel, Switzerland and a number of other cities have a hospitality tax that is paid on any overnight stay at a hotel, motel, short term rental, etc. Each guest receives a pass that gives unlimited access to public transit options for the time of the stay. This increases ridership, promotes sustainable methods of getting around, keeps car off the roads (especially ones with people who don't know their way around), and it helps subsidize the public transit networks for those who live here full-time."

Perhaps it could be a separate transit fee, which does the above but also helps fund sidewalk infrastructure and downtown loopers as Seth Goodman mentioned in his post above.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 2:33 pm
Thanks for your suggestion, Trey! -Moderator

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Thomas Miner · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 2:30 pm

👍 2 Votes

KEEP OUR CITY CLEAN! ALL THE TIME. Aside from the dismal state of public transportation that has been repeatedly voted down as well as the removal of Uber and Lyft to assuage visitors trying to navigate our city there is a constant eyesore; the homeless on 7th and Red River. The camping out, the never seem to be empty trash cans and litter is disgusting and unhealthy. Spend the money monitoring and picking up the trash and litter all through downtown ALL THE TIME. Walk down the pedestrian area on 6th street during and an event it is comparable to taking a stroll through a garbage pit. Hire the homeless to clean up might be an answer.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:22 pm

Thanks for your suggestions, Thomas. -Moderator

Ronald McGrath · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 3:04 pm

👍 1 Votes

I think Austin needs tourism to prosper.

That said, I disagree that the tourist taxes should be treated differently. Tourist drive our roads, park, walk and take tours. When friends come to town and visit, they stay in our houses while they run around looking at the Capitol, U.T. and other sights of interest, including festivals and shows.

I think the taxes collected from tourism should be put in the general revenue fund that is used to maintain the city. I do not think that a special bucket for this money to benefit a favored few is a good idea, it smacks of corruption.

Response:

Chris Kosho · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 4:33 pm

100% agree. I came and registered here just to say the same thing. Use tax revenue from tourists to pay off outstanding municipal debt and reduce or stop issuing bonds for projects. This will help make Austin more affordable and is fiscally responsible! I would also re-examine current ways tax money is being used, perhaps for subsidized events, and let private funding replace public funding.

Bob Binder · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 3:12 pm

👍 1 Votes

How about eliminating the "gouge the tourist" tax and encouraging other cities to follow suit. The tourists would have that much more to spend and would increase sales taxes some. And it would be a good advertising enticement for tourists to come here, spend money, and leave.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:23 pm

Interesting idea, Bob! Do you mean eliminating the hotel occupancy tax altogether? If so, how would you account for the lost revenue? -Moderator

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Renee Pepin · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 3:28 pm

👍 0 Votes

Austin needs more green spaces, especially in the downtown areas. Zilker, Auditorium Shores and the Barton Creek Greenbelt are overused. Zilker is often tied up with events like ACL and unavailable to the general public. I wish the Seaholm power plant could have been converted to a park area for downtown residents.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:24 pm

Thanks, Renee--are you suggesting the City spend hotel occupancy taxes on developing more park spaces? If so, where should those go? -Moderator

Bethany Andree · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 3:36 pm

👍 1 Votes

Having lived in Austin nearly 30 years, it's obvious to me that our creative community, both visual and performing arts, is what brings tourism here. The Arts made, and continue to make, Austin hip. (SXSW was partially created to help boost the economy while UT students were all away during spring break.) From what I understand, HOT funds have historically gone to the Arts. With this 'cut-everything-liberal' administration, let's not take those much needed funds away from them.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:25 pm

Thanks for those comments, Bethany. -Moderator

Caiti Coughlan · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 3:36 pm

👍 1 Votes

I was born and raised in Austin and have seen many changes both good and bad. Tourism puts Austin in a real catch-22. We need and want tourists because they greatly contribute to the Austin economy particularly to our service industry workers and our artists who keep Austin culture vibrant and alive, yet that culture is being threatened because the artists and service industry workers can no longer afford to live here. It's frustrating and saddening that after each festival or event Austin experiences, we lose a little bit of what makes Austin such a great place to live. I used to love SXSW when I was a kid. It was a chance to hear music I would have otherwise never heard of and see films from all over the world. Now it's saturated with corporate shenanigans and I have absolutely no desire to be down there, and this is coming from a musician who has been actively performing in Austin since high school. Each year it gets bigger and crazier. And in order to compensate for the increase in size it feels like the city is selling out to appease these tourists to too great an extent. We host these festivals and events yet the people who live here and have grown up here are left with sky-rocketing property taxes, an ever increasing crime rate, and no means to get around our own city when these tourists come (and that feels like every weekend these days). There are so many ways that this tax money could be used, better infrastructure, better transportation systems, and most importantly more affordable housing for AUSTIN residents. If you want to "Keep Austin Weird" you need to make it affordable for us weirdos to live here!

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Response:

camille smith · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 4:45 pm
Preach!

Sarah Simpson · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 3:48 pm

👍 0 Votes

Better public transit so that everyone who lives here, along with all the tourists, can move through the city - to and from airport, downtown to hotels, work to home, park to school - with ease and without heavy reliance on privatized car-centric infrastructures.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:29 pm
Thanks for your suggestions, Sarah! How would you suggest the City spend hotel occupancy taxes specifically to improve public transit? Different kinds of service, more frequent service, different routes? -Moderator

Bob Binder · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 4:26 pm

👍 0 Votes

If there is no support for eliminating the tax, and since there are so many worthwhile uses for this extra money, then it seems the discussion should turn to whether to do one or a few things well with the money, or instead, to do a whole lot of things a little bit. For example, if it's transportation we improve, that takes a whole lot of money. If we want to do restrooms, that probably costs a good bit less. It would help this discussion if the City moderators could give us approximations of how much tourist tax money there is and in what range some of the projects mentioned might cost. For me, I would like to see more of an investment in open spaces downtown and more police to keep traffic moving during the many events put on. For example, Republic Square was a parking lot for the Statesman in the 1970's. The 1973-75 Council bought it and returned it to being a park (site of one of the 4 original parks of Austin). Eliminating incentives (aka tax shifts to the rest of us) for prosperous businesses to come here would free up a lot of money to use locally, but this discussion is not about that.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:37 pm
Hi, Bob: thanks for your question. I believe roughly \$90 million was collected in hotel occupancy taxes in the last fiscal year. -Moderator

Chris Kosho · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 4:34 pm

👍 0 Votes

Use tax revenue from tourists to pay off outstanding municipal debt and reduce or stop issuing bonds for projects. This will help make Austin more affordable and is fiscally responsible! I would also re-examine current ways tax money is being used, perhaps for subsidized events, and let private funding replace public funding.

Response:

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Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 12:40 pm
Thanks for your comments, Chris! -Moderator

camille smith · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 26, 2017 4:54 pm

👍 1 Votes

People have different ideas about what they want Austin to become or what they think defines a thriving city. I was born and raised here and I have a different opinion than a recent transplant might. Austin doesn't need more green spaces or even more sidewalks, we need real answers to the growing homeless population, rising cost of living, unaffordable housing, gentrification, racial stratification, struggling public schools, etc. Tourism is only good if it has a long term benefit, we need to utilize any excess to fix deep seated problems, not invest money into superficial problems. Perhaps job creation in the form of trash collection or other city services is one way to find gainful employment for the homeless, maybe investing in land where housing for the homeless can be built, maybe investing in determining sections of the city "historical" and create caps on property taxes for senior citizens or long time residents, so that families of color on the east side aren't pushed out of the city limits. Additionally, if people could afford to live in town that would reduce traffic congestion. I don't write tax laws so I don't know how to better answer this question, but I know there are a million things that need to be done and landscaping isn't one of them. I don't believe it's impossible to understand the deeper issues and address them.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 1:10 pm
Thanks for your comments, Camille. -Moderator

Katherine Catmull · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 27, 2017 1:21 pm

👍 2 Votes

Please continue to use the funds to support the arts--Austin won't be Austin without its vibrant arts scene. Right now real estate prices have put all the arts in a severe venue crisis--soon small theater and dance groups will have almost no options for places to perform. It would be a huge boon to the city if these funds could assist in the purchase of a warehouse or an old strip mall that could be converted into performance spaces.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 1:11 pm
Thanks for your comments, Katherine. -Moderator

North Lamar Contact Team · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 27, 2017 2:47 pm

👍 0 Votes

Hotel Occupancy Taxes (HOT) must be spent to benefit the areas of the city, sectors of the economy, and workers who generate them. Not all hotel stays are related to downtown, SXSW, or the convention center. People come to Austin for business, or to

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visit family or friends. Outside of downtown, there are several clusters of business-class hotels and of motels designed for budget travellers. These areas must be served by the HOT revenue, including developing related businesses such as restaurants, and providing transportation and safety features particularly considering visitors, who may be unfamiliar with the surroundings. As well, HOT should be used for workforce and small business development, providing a route for experienced staff and contractors to build their skills and businesses, and increase their income. This is particularly important for the multilingual service sector workforce, to expand Austin's attractiveness to global travellers.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 1:11 pm
Thanks for those comments! -Moderator

Shannon Grounds · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 27, 2017 3:53 pm

👍 1 Votes

The city should continue to use the HOT tax revenue to support local arts organizations. Theatre, dance, film, music and visual artists contribute greatly to the character of Austin - the very thing that brings tourists here in the first place, and yet many of these artists are being forced out of the city and many of these organizations are struggling or being forced to shut down due to venue scarcity, quintupled rental rates, and a lack of institutional support from the city. Please use these funds to continue to support arts organizations and to establish an arts complex (perhaps in an empty strip mall or warehouse complex) with city support similar to that of Zach Scott so that Austin can continue to be a cultural destination.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 1:12 pm
Thanks for your comments, Shannon! -Moderator

David Aronofsky · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 27, 2017 8:34 pm

👍 0 Votes

Spend the dollars on free and subsidized mass transportation designed to transport tourists by using the dollars they bring in.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 1:13 pm
Thanks for your suggestion, David! Do you have thoughts about the type of mass transportation and the route it should take? -Moderator

Sharmyn Lilly · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 28, 2017 2:10 pm

👍 0 Votes

The City of Austin needs to raise funds to retrofit Faulk Central Public Library into expansion space for the Austin History Center once the new central library is completed and the library moves out of its present building. The Austin History Center preserves

How Can We Make Tourism Help Our City the Most?

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Austin's and Travis County's archives -- our history. Having access to and understanding our history allows our city to make informed decisions going forward so the Austin History Center is essential and vital to all present-day Austin citizens and her future citizens. Additionally, it provides material which researchers from Boy Scouts and students to professional journalists, videographers, filmmakers, artists, and other researchers and writers use to describe and depict Austin to the greater reading public. The Austin History Center is not only overcrowded; it is out of space to accept donations of new archives from individuals, businesses, organizations, and institutions which, together, tell the story of Austin's "collective memory" (our present-day history) of the past and present day; to process these materials; and to properly preserve them as well as to make them accessible to citizens and other researchers to study in the Reading Room as well as in exhibits and publications. Plans have been underway for several years about how the Faulk Central Library can best be used to provide for the Austin History Center's present and future needs. Using space for enhanced and expanded exhibits can make the new space a new destination for tourists in addition to citizens, bringing in more tourism funds, which brings this idea full circle.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 1:20 pm
Thanks for your comments, Sharmyn! -Moderator

Ken Webster · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 28, 2017 3:30 pm

👍 0 Votes

The city must continue to use the HOT tax revenue to support local arts organizations. Theatre, dance, film, music and visual artists contribute to what makes Austin a great place to live and to visit. Our arts scene brings tourists to Austin, and the HOT revenue is key to keeping our arts scene alive and thriving.

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 1:32 pm
Thanks for your comments, Ken! -Moderator

Tim Altanero · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 29, 2017 1:33 am

👍 0 Votes

Although it would be great to spread the money around and support various causes, many more important than what I'm about to suggest, I think it is important to first "finish" the downtown infrastructure and access as that is (correct me if I'm wrong) among the primary tourist destinations.

It would be great to build a walkable, possibly pedestrian-only sector so we're not always dodging traffic or, as a driver, unable to turn due to large numbers of pedestrians, thus clogging traffic.

Sidewalk expansion should be coherent and cohesive so we don't run into sudden "skinny" sidewalks.

Transportation to/from the airport to downtown via a subway or commuter train (not a

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"toy train" like the "red line") would decongest the airport.

A transport "station" or "hub" needs to be created downtown where people can connect to other modes of transport and additional subway (love subways) and commuter lines.

(Paid) public parking needs to be increased tremendously and not be subject to sudden crazy "spikes" where a \$10 space is \$30 or more during events until our infrastructure is complete.

A rational, comprehensive plans needs to be in place to develop this infrastructure, focused specifically on downtown so that we don't create "alternative" "downtowns" like The Domain, which should have been downtown in the first place.

What makes great cities great is that they have - and support - a vibrant, connected, usable, and "centered" urban core - if that makes sense. It gives us all a feeling that we live in "the city" vs. our varying neighborhoods, suburbs, and exburbs. It also invests us in the success of the city as a city instead of a collection of wildly differentiated and unevenly distributed outer areas.

Think of any great city. What makes them great is investment in downtown infrastructure. Otherwise we become Los Angeles, a perfect example of a city that refused to invest in its downtown to such an extent that a lot of people don't even know there is a downtown, much less want to go there.

I'm probably just dreaming but if we can create a great downtown, development can be more concentrated and keep us focussed on what makes Austin great so that once we're finally done catching up with missing infrastructure, we can build the transport and accessibility all of us want to the urban core.

If we can focus on that, we'll increase tourism and generate more and more money to fund any number of other causes but unless and until we address downtown, we aren't going to create a new great city.

Off topic a bit - do we know where we collect the most "tourist" taxes? Is it airport? DT? Elsewhere?

Response:

Coapublic Information · Admin · (Postal Code: unknown) · May 01, 2017 1:33 pm
Thanks for your comments, and good question. We collect tourist/hotel occupancy taxes primarily at hotels in the downtown area, as far as I know. -Moderator