

## City Council Special Called Meeting Transcript – 4/2/2019

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[09:15:15 AM]

>> Mayor Adler: ALL RIGHT.

I THINK WE HAVE A QUORUM.

SO WE'RE GOING TO GO AHEAD AND START.

TODAY IS TUESDAY, APRIL 2nd, 2019.

IT IS 9:13.

WE ARE HERE AT THE AUSTIN CENTRAL LIBRARY, WHICH IS 710 WEST CESAR CHAVEZ IN AUSTIN.

WE'RE HERE BASICALLY TO RECEIVE THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS STUDY ON ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR DOWNTOWN CONVENTION CENTER DISTRICT.

WE HAVE A HARD STOP AT 11.

IF WE FINISH BEFORE THEN, THEN WE'LL ALL RETURN TO WORK EARLY.

THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME, I THINK.

YOU KNOW, THE ABILITY TO PAUSE AND JUST HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT PLACE MAKING IN THE CITY AND DESIGN IN THE CITY IS AN EXCITING CONVERSATION FOR US TO HAVE ALMOST WITHOUT REGARD TO ANYTHING ELSE, AND OBVIOUSLY THERE IS EVERYTHING ELSE ALSO PLAYS INTO THIS CONVERSATION.

DEAN ADDINGTON, THANK YOU SO MUCH.

YOU AND THE DEPARTMENT COULD BE SUCH A GREATER RESOURCE TO THIS CITY THAN WE'VE EVER TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF, AND I REALLY DO HOPE THAT THAT TODAY MARKS A TIME WHEN THERE'S JUST SO MUCH MORE OF THIS AS OUR CITY IS CHANGING SO RAPIDLY, JUST TO REMIND US OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PAUSING LONG ENOUGH TO REALLY DO THESE KINDS OF THINGS RIGHT.

AND PROFESSOR SHEARER, I'VE BEEN INVOLVED WITH YOU AS YOU TEACH MAYORS AROUND THE COUNTRY IN THE DESIGN INSTITUTE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF URBAN PLACE MAKING AND DESIGN, AND TO HAVE YOU NOW FOCUSED ON US HERE IN TOWN IS JUST IS JUST, AGAIN, REAL EXCITING.

SO TODAY IS MOSTLY FOR US JUST TO RECEIVE, COLLEAGUES, JUST FOR US TO RECEIVE INFORMATION.  
AND I'M ANXIOUS FOR US AND THE COMMUNITY TO HAVE A CHANCE TO SEE THIS.  
MANAGER, DO YOU WANT TO TAKE IT AND THEN TURN IT OVER.

[09:17:17 AM]

>> SURE.

THANK YOU, MAYOR, COUNCIL.

AS YOU KNOW THIS IS THE RESULT OF A RESOLUTION THAT WAS PASSED BACK IN DECEMBER OF 2017.  
SO A LOT OF HARD WORK WENT INTO THE STUDY THAT WE'RE GOING TO BE HEARING ABOUT TODAY.  
WE REALLY LOOK FORWARD TO TAKING THIS INFORMATION IN AND THEN WE'LL TALK A LITTLE BIT  
ABOUT WHAT THE POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS WOULD BE AT THE END OF THE DISCUSSION TODAY.  
BUT REALLY THANK THE UNIVERSITY FOR THEIR HARD WORK.  
AND WITH THAT I'M GOING TO PASS IT OFF TO DR. SHEARER.

>> Mayor Adler: OKAY.

BUT IN THAT REGARD NOT SO MUCH FOR US TO DEBATE OR TO DISCUSS OR TO DECIDE ANYTHING  
TODAY, IT'S JUST TO RECEIVE THE INFORMATION.

>> THANK YOU.

MAYOR ADLER, COUNCILMEMBERS, ON BEHALF OF THE CENTER FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, THANK YOU  
FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT OUR WORK TO YOU.

IT'S BEEN A GREAT JOY AND A GREAT PRIVILEGE TO UNDERTAKE THIS EFFORT.

JOINING ME HERE IN THE FRONT OF THE ROOM ARE DEAN ALMIE, THE DIRECTOR OF OUR URBAN  
DESIGN PROGRAM AND THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR FOR THIS PROJECT.

DR. JAKE WEGMAN, THE ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN THE REGIONAL DESIGN PROGRAM NO THE SCHOOL  
OF ARCHITECTURE.

DR. GREG HOLMAN, THE DIRECTOR FOR THE COLLEGE OF REAL ESTATE.

AND SARAH WOO, THE DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE.

I WANT TO MENTION OTHERS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ROBERT.

A TEAM OF SPECTACULAR I DON'T USE THAT WORD LIGHTLY, GRADUATE STUDENTS, (NAMING TEAM).  
ALSO JOINING US HERE TODAY IS THE DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, MICHELLE ADDINGTON.

AS THE CITY MANAGER MENTIONED, IN DECEMBER 2017 COUNCIL ASKED THE CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TO EXAMINE THIS QUESTION.

CAN NEW PROGRAMMATIC SPATIAL CONFIGURATIONS AND ECONOMIC MODELS FOR URBAN CONVENTION CENTERS BE APPLIED TO DOWNTOWN IN A MEANINGFUL AND COMMUNITY BASED MANNER?

SO THE CENTRAL ISSUE IS CAN WE MAKE VIBRANT DOWNTOWNS AND ALSO ACCOUNT FOR THE SPATIAL NEEDS OF A CONVENTION CENTER FIT FOR THE 21st CENTURY?

OUR REPORT FRAMEWORKS FOR PLACE MAKING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR THE AUSTIN CONVENTION CENTER DISTRICT WAS ISSUED AT THE END OF LAST WEEK.

[09:19:15 AM]

AS I THINK ALL OF YOU HAVE SEEN, IT'S OVER 275 PAGES LONG, CONTAINS A LARGE NUMBER OF GRAPHICS AND TABLES.

WE WILL NOT GO THROUGH PAGE BY PAGE TODAY.

INSTEAD WE ARE GOING TO OFFER YOU AN OVERVIEW.

WE KNOW, THOUGH, THAT IT'S A BIG REPORT AND YOU WILL HAVE QUESTIONS.

WE WILL BE HAPPY TO WORK WITH STAFF AFTER THIS.

TO SET UP TIMES AND MEETINGS TO GO FORWARD AFTER YOU'VE HAD TIME TO ABSORB ALL THE MATERIAL.

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION, I WANT TO REEMPHASIZE A FEW THINGS.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, OUR MISSION WAS TO INFORM CITY COUNCIL ON ITS DECISION MAKING PROCESS.

WE ARE HERE AS ANALYSTS, NOT AS ADVOCATES.

OUR SCOPE OF WORK WAS LIMITED TO CONSIDERING A CONVENTION CENTER IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA AND WE'VE AIMED TO SYNTHESIZE KNOWLEDGE GAINED IN PRIOR STUDIES, PLANS OF OTHER PROJECTS IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA TO PRODUCE A RANGE OF SCENARIOS THAT CALL ATTENTION TO STRATEGIC CHOICES.

THE SCENARIOS THAT YOU WILL SEE ARE PRESENTED THROUGH SPATIAL DIAGRAMS WITH PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL ASSESSMENTS.

SO THAT IS WE ARE SHOWING CONFIGURATIONS OF SPACE AND ROUGH MODELED COSTS.

WE ARE NOT SHOWING YOU FINAL BLUEPRINTS OR SPECIFIC BUDGETS FOR CONSTRUCTION OR OPERATIONAL EXPENSES.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE ARE NOT MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS ON ANY SCENARIO.

NOW, AS YOU HEAR WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO HEAR THIS AFTERNOON AND READ THE REPORT, THERE ARE TWO BROAD THEMES THAT I HOPE YOU CONSIDER.

THE FIRST IS THAT PLACE MAKING MATTERS.

AND I THINK THAT WHERE WE'RE HERE, THIS NEW LIBRARY, SHOWS THAT PLACE MAKING MATTERS.

THE CONVENTION CENTER LOCATION SITS AT THE INTERSECTION OF FOUR RAPIDLY DEVELOPING CORRIDORS, SALTILLO PLAZA GOING INTO THE EAST SIDE, THE RAINEY STREET DISTRICT TO THE SOUTH SHORE ON THE SOUTH, SEAHOLM ON THE WEST AND TO THE NORTH THE DELL MEDICAL SCHOOL, RED RIVER CULTURAL DISTRICT AND INNOVATION AREA.

THE LOCATION OF THE CONVENTION CENTER BECOMES EITHER A GATEWAY TO CONNECT ALL OF THOSE FOUR THINGS OR A BLOCKAGE.

AS A RESULT OF THAT SITUATION, THREE SCALES OF URBAN DESIGN HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED.

FIRST THE IMMEDIATE AREA AROUND THE CONVENTION CENTER, THE LARGER SOUTHWEST QUADRANT OF DOWNTOWN AND CONNECTIVITY WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY.

FINALLY WITH REGARD TO PLACE MAKING, THE PROJECTS NEED TO CONTRIBUTE TO MULTIPLE CIVIC GOALS AND SUPPORT VISITORS AROUND RESIDENTS ALIKE.

DEAN ALMIE IS GOING TO EXPAND ON ALL OF THOSE THEMES, ALL OF THOSE POINTS.

THE SECOND BROAD THEME IS THAT ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM MATTERS.

WE'VE USED THAT WORD INTENTIONAL.

ON THE OTHER HAND YOU CAN IMAGINE THAT THE CONVENTION CENTER IS A THING,

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>> It's more than a thing. It's about relationships and how it works in a larger city. The leisure and hospitality industry currently contributes to 15% of Austin's total economy. That's up from 11% in 2000 and it's more than the state average of 13%. Second, convention centers make important contributions to the secretary E not only in terms of absolute dollars, but also in terms of the way they support activities throughout the week and the kind of jobs they help create. And hotel taxes make convention centers possible and support other community goals. And now before I turn this over to Dean almie for the work, I would like to introduce the Dean of architect for Michelle Addington for a few words. >> Thank you so much, Allen. Thank you city council, thank you members of the community . And city of

Austin. I cannot tell you what a great honor it was, what a great incredible honor it was to be able to serve our community by participating in this study over the last year. I just wanted to foreground a couple of things that you may not be aware of and you should be aware of when it comes to those of us who work on the built environment. This is a day and an era when we're talking about design thinking in many, many different types of venues and under many different types of scenarios. The type of design thinking that is being taught in many places tends to build upon the creative process brainstorming so many things like that. That's not what we do at the school of architecture. Design thinking in our world is actually sort of dealing many times with intractable conflicts, developing scenarios, systems and tools to weigh between things that may not neatly go together, but we have to make a decision about. How we might look at sort of

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dealing with a response to the cultural identity of a neighborhood, at the same time understanding particular distribution from diesel fueled trucks. These are the types of things that those of us who work in the built environment confront and deal with when we do design thinking. It's about sort of understanding how you weigh, how you balance, what you bring to the table, what you privilege within that. One of the things that's been incredibly interesting in the last 15 years is the proliferation of really advanced tools for doing that. This is what we're bringing to the table for you today is our use of the many different types of tools, the analysis, the simulation that we do to bring all of these different domains, all of this different information out there to be considered. We're not here to make those decisions, we're here to give you the tools, give you the scenarios, give you the information in order to sort of help you make the decisions because you also bring something to the table that we do not have. You have a knowledge of your constituency, you have an understanding of what you want for the future activity -- the future of the city and we want to be your partners in how all of this moves forward. This is what we can do within the school of architecture. I also wanted to point out that we're actually quite rare as a school of architecture in this country. Don't quote me on this number, so maybe I won't use it, but -- [laughter]. Let's just say handful in this country of schools that have the breadth that we have. We represent every single discipline dealing with the built environment from the very smallest scale of interior design to the largest scale of regional planning. We deal with it in sort of all aspects of design through policy and planning as well. We cover it all. There is no other school of architecture that comes close to that kind of breadth with the exception of just a few others in this

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country. So we also bring this unique collection and comprehensive collection of knowledge and skills to play. For me I've been here in Austin now almost two years. I love Austin. I feel like this is the best decision I've ever made to move to this city. It's a privilege to be part of this process moving forward. It was an honor for the school to have an opportunity to serve the city. All I can say is we're very grateful for the knowledge that we've learned as well in moving forward in this process. Now let's hope that

what we see today will be of mutual benefit to everyone here in this room and for this community. And so with that I want to introduce Dean almie, who was our principal investigator leading this particular investigation. >> [Inaudible - no mic]. >> Thank you. >> Good morning, everybody. Good morning, council, mayor, citizens. I would like to talk a little bit about how we approach the project and what the methodology was before sort of going into the scenarios. And the first and probably most important thing is that probably the first four to six months of this research actually had to do with researching out and -- reaching out and gathering data. We consulted with a whole series of groups, both public and private. We also engaged a lot of different sources for our research. Simple things like trying to get auto cad data on what projects are coming down the road. Because underneath all of this is a desire to look and

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project forward some 20 years and say what's going to happen, you know, two decades from now when a whole series of new initiatives sort of come online? What are the potential sort of symbiotic relationships between these things and what are the potential conflicts between them? And that's one of the things that as the scenarios began to develop we were very conscious of how to begin to reconcile these diverse initiatives. As Dr. Sheerer mentioned, one of the first things we did was look at a little bit of the history, both at the convention center, but also development in the central city. And this series of maps begin to look at a transformation from 1992 to present of where major development sectors have happened in the city over time. And what you can see is in 1992 when the original convention center, the downtown version of the convention center, was constructed, it was really a facility that was designed to be on the edge of the city, right? We have I-35 just off the slide. You can see congress avenue here. And that's the location of the original convention center. Waller creek was still subjected to significant flooding. There was not a lot of consideration for how the area of the city would develop, you know, in the future. I believe that the design of the original convention center tried to implement a certain degree of place making there, but it had a clear front side and a clear back side, and that back side is the side that faces, you know, red river and towards waller creek. And now that the city has begun to develop along these sort of four armatures that Dr. Sheerer mentioned, which are sort of loosely, you know, the university down to the convention center, the convention center across the

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I-35 corridor and to the east, south on Rainey street and even to south shore waterfront. And then of course along what I'm calling the creek to creek corridor, which is sort of shoal creek to waller creek and the role of second, third, fourth street as a sort of connective system. That's what lead to this diagram of what we're calling the four vectors. That these are really four sections of the city where not only is major development happening now, but we foresee this as being where major development is going to be happening within the next 10, 20 years. In fact, there are many projects. We documented a whole range of them in the appendix of the report. All within these vectors. But even since producing the report

we've learned about more projects that are sort of ongoing. So this is a moving target, but we believe that these sort of four vectors are the principal areas where development is likely to happen in the projected, foreseeable future. And as you can see, the site of the convention center exists right at the nexus of these four, so it actually is located at a really, really critical joint between -- located in a really, really critical joint between these four connection vectors, which means the way the convention center is designed needs to pay attention to questions of public space and connectivity and the provision of public benefit for the citizens of the city as well as people that might come in as visitors and contribute to the larger economy. And you can see that as we started to actually model out what the future is, where there are potential buildings coming online, there's an incredible density as I'm sure you're all aware, that is beginning to build up in each of these sectors. Not least of which is the sort of Rainey street and the future of the south shore waterfront, but now

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probably less evident in this drawing is the potential for what's called the innovation district, which is the district between the convention center which sits here kind of up all along kind of central health, the UT medical district, the redevelopment of waller creek and the parks along the waller creek system as well as sort of up to the university. Now, in looking at the potential for scenarios, it was important that we didn't ignore prior work. And so obviously one of the very first things we did was we familiarized ourselves with the report that was made public in 2015, which is the Austin convention center long range planning report. In that report, which was compiled by, you know, citizens, groups and task force and stakeholders, there were four studies that were done looking at the potential sort of expansion sites for how the convention center might increase in area. And that report came to the conclusion that there was really only one viable option, and that was to move across Trinity street to what at the time was six half-block parcels to the west. And that report was eventually ratified by the urban land institute's report. And so in reviewing the kind of conclusions both in the uli report as well as in the long range planning -- long range planning report, we also came to the conclusion that that was correct, that those were the most likely and maybe even the only truly viable option for significantly expanding the square foot of the convention center. In order to test expansion scenarios, we looked at 27 different convention centers around the United States and

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Canada. Those 27 are all documented in the appendix of the report. And of those 27, we picked out six that we thought might be the most comparable in terms of what the problem was here in Austin. The first, of course, is San Antonio, which is down in the lower corner, and that primarily is in there because of questions of proximity. It was comparable in terms of costs and construction costs and all sorts of other things. The other three which are Cleveland, Seattle, Charlotte, Nashville and Vancouver, are interesting because they are urban convention centers. And one of the points that I really want to make is that, you know, the original idea of the convention center comes out of this sort of 19th century

market hall typology, which is a very large building that is isolated from the fabric of the city because of service functions. And as we moved into the 20th century the need for a large scale parking lots around them. So when you look at a lot of the convention centers around the country, Dallas is such a one, you will find that they don't actually engage the public space of the city very well. And so when we chose sort of this grouping to sort of highlight out of the 27 we looked at, we choose ones that were trying to capitalize upon the -- capitalize upon the particular attributes of the places upon which they were built. And that has some implications on the planning. So for example, Cleveland, which is a smaller one, but really interesting in that it was inserted into the original Daniel Burnham plan from 1920, actually syncs the convention hall into the ground and creates a public park on the roof. Seattle is in some ways the most interesting F me in that it begins to abandon this model of this large,

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say, half a million square foot contiguous, pancake typology of exhibition halls and begins to stack a series of smaller exhibition halls vertically. And the reason for this is because it has to fit within the blocks of the city. It has to be urban. And what we're finding as we begin to look at the modern generation of convention centers is that the programming model has changed and that ultimately it's no longer just about really large scale exhibition rooms, it's about exhibition rooms as catalysts for other things, banquets, meeting halls, informal conversations in corridors, what is called prefunction space. So this idea of the programming of the internal workings of the convention center is evolving as well from the sort of more traditional models that many of us think about when we think about what a convention center is. If we look at the existing convention center facility, the original four-block section which was built in 1992 largely is an older model. It was two really big exhibition halls with some ancillary related space, kitchen, there's a ballroom and there's some circulation. As we moved to the 2002 addition to the north, the program has already begun to change. There's the construction of two exhibition halls, but there's a lot more ancillary kind of programming attached to it such as meeting rooms, additional ballrooms, new kitchens, breakout spaces. And the result of this is that when the convention center is leased, if it's not a very large function such as, say, south by southwest, the preference of clients is to lease the northern end because the northern end is actually a better fit for the current business model of

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conventions. The southern end gets used much less, even to the point where the kitchen is not really used at all. So the whole southern original section of the convention center actually has programming issues. So one of the things that we began to do is we started to look at the possibility of, let's say, reprogramming the convention center both in terms of the way it works now, but also as it might potentially grow into the future was in looking at these 27 convention centers around the country, we developed kind of a programming module which was meant to be scalable and expandable. So you have basically -- since the private property area within one sort of city of Austin block is approximately 75,000



square feet, we decided to use that as a sort of modular model to determine what would be the appropriate mixtures of programmings that might go inside a convention center. And what you see here is a set of diagrams that look at the mix within each of these modules. So for instance, if this is one exhibit module of 75,000 square feet, there's obviously a certain amount of service functions that go with that, but there are breakrooms, large classrooms, large lecture halls and service functions that go with each one of these sorts of modules. So if you scale that up times two, times four, times eight, you need to scale up all these other sort of related functions as well. It is not just about the exhibition hall. Now, there were also questions about why not just expand the existing sort of convention exhibition hall facilities and make one big contiguous 500,000 square foot flexible exa bus space. And what you will see in this diagram over here on the side is basically that's the amount of area that

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would be taken up by 500,000 square feet of exhibition hall and its related service functions, which as you can see occupies a pretty significant portion of the downtown urban blocks. So in terms of trying to balance the internal functions of the convention center with place-making questions, it became evident that we needed to look at the more contemporary models, at potential models for stacking. And it's interesting that when you actually talk to the sort of convention center industry, their definition of contiguous has changed from one big space to spaces that can be used together collectively. So technically the Seattle convention center is contiguous space even though there are pieces of exhibition halls on different levels. The other interesting thing about some of the urban models is that they were also serviced from below grade in order to make them more urban. And so the idea that you need to drive trucks directly into the floor of the exhibition hall is not the only model and it's not even the most contemporary model in terms of trying to urbanize convention center facilities. One of the things that we also did was we took a look at what we'll call the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats diagram for the area. And we began to map what is the existing sort of system of public space in the city and also where's the activity going on around the city and where are the potential conflicts. So if we look at this diagram here, we made some assumptions. And so for the purpose of some of the graphics, you'll see some of the assumptions we made, one of which is perhaps optimistically that I-35 might change in the future. So we looked at the

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potential of reconnect Austin, you know, the kind of sinking of the freeway. We didn't model all that out because there are a series of potential outcomes that could happen. But what we did model is if I-35 is to lower and there is going to be some sort of park on top, where's the sort of most, let's say, important place that that might be located? And sort of we show it more or less between Cesar Chavez and fourth street because of the proximity to waller creek, because of the proximity to saltillo and the east side. We also began to look at Rainey street, which you can see has obviously a whole series of developments getting ready to come online, really significant developments. And Rainey street is one of the major sort

of event areas of the city, especially during times when there are festivals, as obviously is sixth street, which is up here on the top, and all of these little blue brackets actually represent where retail frontage is. So what you can see is you can see that there's a pretty much a big gap right in here in terms of where the convention center is. Along red river where these redlines are are major conflict areas, service yards for trucks, the back of the convention center, pinch points at the intersection of Cesar Chavez and red river, truck loading conflicts, and even conflicts with all the taxis that line up to service the fairmont hotel. When the city invests -- and the waller creek conservancy invests the amount of money and effort that it's putting in to turn waller creek into what I would consider one of the truly great linear urban parks in America, we have basically a facility that turns its back to that investment. So we saw that as a major, major issue. Now, so this is kind of a

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model turning on what the existing development looks like in the downtown or in this quadrant of the downtown. And just for the purposes of the model, we sort of modeled out a little bit of the michaelan valkenan project for waller creek. We show one potential outcome for I-35, understanding that we have no control over that. But you can see that there are still quite a lot of vacant lots, most of those lots have various projects currently kind of in the pipeline, but as we begin to look at this, one of the things that -- one of the questions we always got was, well, what's the impact of the capitol view corridors. And what you can see is that the capitol view corridors don't actually impact the convention center or any of the immediate parcels associated potentially with an addition to the convention center at all. In fact, curiously enough, if you do begin to build any kind of park over I-35, some of these capitol view corridors are actually meant to be seen from I-35, right? And I guess traffic is going slow enough that it's a really nice view. So there are some really interesting relationships between the future of I-35, waller creek, its relationship to the capitol view corridors, but none of that directly impacts development potentials for the convention center or the sort of potential development around the convention center. Now, in the report we have a series of scenarios. We have seven sort of variants. Around variant one is what if we just left it alone. And there are obviously large sort of economic questions associated with that, but that's less of an architectural one other than to point out as I already have what the potential conflicts are in terms of the current design.

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The second scenario we looked at was what if we didn't do anything with the convention center and we just let the five parcels to the west sort of build out based on what the market might likely produce, understanding that there's a 25 to one floor area ratio over there. And what you see modeled on these drawings is not even a 25 to one floor area ratio. It's sort of likely development based on kind of currently the scale of projects that are going on in the city. I will say that I have seen a project since then that has actually tried to build out at 25 to one. So we are seeing even since this report is done, we're seeing a kind of amplification of development pressure and I think that's really, really important and I'll

come back to that a little bit later. Now, each scenario is sort of presented with one of these slides and I'm not actually expecting everyone gets all the information on this slide, and much of this is also in the report, but what this slide basically shows is in the corner you will see a diagram showing the network of public space associated with this scenario, which is down here. So what you'll see is the redevelopment of waller creek, so scenario -- and actually another really important component of this that I clearly need to mention is capital metro's project connect sort of proposals for the future. So the idea of high speed transit, red line, green line set of connections, the new capital gateway project, which is on the northside of the existing convention center, these are potential major initiatives that are going to impact any future convention center scenario. And they are so significant in fact that they are potentially another source of conflict if they are not

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sort of handled appropriately because you have issues of automobile traffic, you have issues of pedestrian traffic, you have issues of high speed transit and you have the potential for closing off street for festivals, and all of these things are not necessarily mutually supportive. So it's very important to sort of see how we begin to kind of deal with the potential conflicts. Or could we turn these conflicts into an asset. One of the things that when you see these slides, and you will see one of these for each scenario, is you'll see at the bottom obviously the work of public space in the district. Just above that is the ground floor organization of program. Like what the relationship is between the public space surrounding the scenario and the internal workings of the convention center. And I want to say that you'll see drawings like this and then up above these are upper floor plans and then a sectional relationship. Why we did this was not to design the buildings because we understand that the potential building outcomes could be any number of potential variance, but what we want to do is make sure anything we modeled was at least feasible. So in going through all of those other 27 convention centers and trying to come up with this idea after modular program, if you have this much exhibition space, how much of this other kind of space do you need? We did this in order to test the viability of each of the scenarios, not to design the buildings but to say that these buildings actually are workable. And by doing that that gave us the opportunity to then concentrate on the public space place-making aspects of each scenario which is the most important. And place-making if you read John Jacobs as all. Is not only connected to external space, but to

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internal program. And how that supports the life on the street or in the squares around the buildings, right? So one of the initials this area is sort of a dearth of retail, for example. And retail on the ground is extremely important in terms of activating street frontages and providing connectivity. You know, the desire to walk from one place to another in the city. There's a kind of rule of thumb that says people will walk a quarter mile and my reaction to that is I'll walk a quarter mile in new York, but I'm not going to walk a quarter mile by a bunch of surface parking lots. So the relationship between program buildings and

the adjacent public spaces really is really, really critical. Scenario 3, which is a variant of the option 3-b from the 2015 convention center report, its most current iteration as kind of reworked by ginsler associates, basically does three or four things. One of the things that it does is it incorporates public-private partnership opportunities potentially with the existing stakeholders, but it also does a series of things that I consider to be slightly problematic relative to place-making aspects in the city. Number one is it basically makes a five-block long contiguous facility which has one very minor sort of passage, paseo, that attempts to connect second street through to the existing convention center. You can see that right here along this sort of white line. It's very -- it's very small in scale. Scenario 3 actually locates the first of the major exhibition halls in this new facility below grade. And since they are sort of

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double height you can look down into them, but the result of that is that you have very little actual retail on the street. Very small sort of slivers along San Jacinto, but for the most part it's not contributing a lot of new retail to the area and it's creating a very small scale connection through from second street. The other thing that scenario B does is in incorporating a public parking garage into the project, it actually shows the ingress and egress out of that parking garage off of Trinity. So you can see these two little kind of arrows. The underground service for the new facility is off of San Jacinto, but these two arrows represent basically where car traffic would go in and out of the building. The problem, of course, with that is if you close down that part of Trinity for festivals, plus have you light rail or -- sorry, high speed transit potentially using that corridor, there are some potential serious conflicts to Trinity with all of that set of mobility sort of questions. So here you can see if we look at -- and by the way, since scenario 3-b was projected in that 2015 report, one of the major differences between scenario 3-b from the original report and scenario 3 from our report is one half block has already disappeared, right, and it now sort of being filled out by the Marriott. So now what was originally sort of planned for let's say six half blocks, we now have only five and a half blocks. So when I say it's a moving target, I'm quite serious about that. There is a lot of pressure and it's moving quite fast. So if we look at this drawing here, what you see is basically that same 3D model view, but I've turned off the five kind of

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half-block parcels to the west. And if we turn on scenario 3 you can see what the massing of that might be like. We have a kind of, let's say, mid rise convention facility with a park on the roof, and then on the northern end a tower that has public-private partnership opportunities with offices, residential, et cetera. That is the state of the scenario as we received it from ginsler, and we believe that it was important to include this in our study. The other issue, perhaps my other criticism of this scenario, is that the facade which faces San Jacinto, the western facade of this building, is all service functions all the way up. So really quite concerned that we could end up with basically a dead urban wall that's two and a half blocks long. And I think that that would actually not contribute to the sort of positive place-making sort of aspects of that scenario. So here you can see that kind of scenario sort of isolated from

the fabric around it so you can kind of see the massing. And then down in the corner is a perspective of second street showing the scale of the current paseo that attempts to link second street through the block to the original facility. And as you can see, it's quite diminutive. And that was one of the things that I reacted to quite strongly. Second street is the central spine of one of these four vectors, what I call the creek to creek vector, which actually extends beyond the creek here to the saltillo district and even potentially beyond and past Lamar. So the ability to sort of

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reconnect across here seemed to be important, not to mention the sort of pending redevelopment of waller creek, which is, you know, east of the existing facility. Which then led us to two other scenarios that were designed or represented, I should say, in phases. One of the critical aspects of these scenarios was that we could not compromise the existing operations of the facility while new construction was going on. So that meant it wasn't a question of, you know, redeveloping the existing site because we would begin to lose market share, and the industry -- you know, the sort of standard city response would be that if we lose clients for the convention center it takes four to five years to get them back. So a reconstruction of the existing facility without the ability to -- which would, let's say, cause us to need to close it for a period of time could have some long-term detrimental effects on the business model of the convention center. Which is one of the reasons why each of these scenarios looks first at building on other pieces of property. And then one of the things that we did which distinguishes our scenarios from, say, the scenarios that were in the 19 -- the 2015 long range master planning report was we said well, how could we project this 20 years out? So what if you actually built some new facility on the western blocks on the other side of Trinity? That actually now gives you the opportunity to rethink the existing facility. Especially in light of its sort of programmatic issues, most notably in the original

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sort of 1992 southern part of the facility. So what you see here, this is called scenario 4.1, which is the first phase of scenario 4. And each of these could be built autonomously or could be added together. There's a kind of mix and match with many of these scenarios. The central issue here with scenario 4.1 is first of all, get the exhibition halls off the ground. If you get the exhibition halls off the ground, you open up the blocks for retail. So the color blue in these drawings is retail. The other thing is what about second street? Shouldn't second street really connect through? If it's really that important a spine of the city, we need to get connectivity. So scenario 4.1 looks at what would happen if we actually left second street open. In this case not necessarily for cars, although it could be, but certainly for pedestrians. So if we start to build this up once again starting from the kind of five half-block parcels to the west, the first and most important move is let's build a kind of gallery through the block. Not a gallery with doors, with glass walls that actually have some degree of, let's say, privatization, but as a real public promenade that begins to connect second street through that block. So what you'll see is kind of really early sort of idea of this as a sort of passage through that is scaled to the scale of second street. Then as you begin to

develop the scenario, it's very much based on the sort of ginsler programming, but it kind of turns it around 180 degrees and it does that for a number of reasons. One is not to try and overwhelm the potential university of brush park, which is -- which certainly is in play in terms of

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refurbishment. But what the galleria does is it actually creates two sections of building. One is the sort of two blocks to the north could be the primary caption facility and the half block to the south is also a public-private partnership opportunity. And it becomes not only a way for pedestrians to connect through the block but it also becomes a central place that begins to connect these parts of the project together. And so you can see what that might look like and then in the kind of prospective rendering down in the corner, the difference between scenario three, small-scale passage through the block, and the scale of what second street might be like if you actually opened it up all the way through back to the facade of the existing convention center. Now, assuming some form of project happens here on this site, you know, scenario 4.1, we then go so far as to say because we can, what if we took down the original 1992 convention center, not the entire convention center, but the piece that's not functioning well right now. That gets us all kinds of public

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photography tries to do it in a way that's much more generous in a way of sort of public connectivity. 5.2 is a little bit more ambitious and it says, well, what if we just took the whole convention center down, the existing one? Why would we propose that? One of the reasons is because the 5.1 and 4.1 all raise the exhibition halls up off the ground, well, the existing convention center all has them on the ground. So they're very difficult relationships in one wanted to create contiguous space between the existing facility and the new facility. So that would be one reason. Another one is it actually gives us a lot of new kinds of opportunities. Opportunity 1 is opportunity one is in order to avoid conflicts, we can connect all the way through to Cesar Chavez, most likely because the way the capital gateway project is being designed as a pedestrian promenade but this creates a whole new face of the convention center east over waller creek and over palm park. It also makes a more compact facility which gives -- which opens up two and a half blocks for alternative uses. On the north public/private partnerships, in the middle, the extension of palm park as a whole new block of public space which is a big issue for large-scale events like south by southwest that claims they do not have enough public space for the kinds of events, and probably most importantly, in light blue, the opportunity for a whole series of community-based programs, right, whether it's music or lectures or art or markets and we also provide F big new public pavilion which could be used by the community right at the intersection between waller creek and second street. If we start to build that up, we

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can see there's the property. This is what the new public space would be like with a new public pavilion, the sort of pedestrian promenade, the expansion of palm park, a new public/private partnership opportunity here on this one block, then the sort of building out of scenario 5. The interesting thing here is that we actually show some towers associated with it. We believe at least in this model, there are many other possibilities, we could get a million square feet of additional office space or other associated spaces which could be used for either revenue generation or moving city offices or a whole number of also possible alternative uses to contribute to the tax base. If you were to move offices here from other city-owned property that opens up other property for affordable housing. So we think that there's all kinds of ways to kind of move the chess pieces around and this is one possibility. Let's see. Finally, I'm going to turn it over to Jake. There's also a comparative table that begins to look at both the space making and economic potentials of each of the things, and you all have printouts on your desk of that. Thank you. >> Good morning. So you have all heard a lot about the possible place making benefits of a new convention district. But to shift gears a little bit, I want to talk about some of the possible economic benefits that could come in. So in our analysis, we started with the humility that we don't have a crystal ball about what's going to happen any more than any of you do or anyone else does. We thought the prudent thing to do was to really start with the assumption of three different scenarios of how many people come to this expanded convention

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center, and we thought that a reasonable base case was -- let me get my laser pointer here -- oh, you can just see it. A reasonable base case would be roughly a 40% increase in attendance. You know, let's say that right now, give or take, we are getting about a half million attendees per year. If we had a 40% boost or 200,000 more, that would put us roughly equivalent to what Nashville has achieved, very similar city in many ways to Austin in their convention center expansion. An upside case is, you know, would be a really great outcome, that's roughly what Denver has achieved in their project. That's about a doubling in attendance over what we have now. Then you know, we have to look at a downside case, too. What if things don't turn out as planned and for whatever reason, we achieve an anemic 10% increase. So we modeled a lot of our projections off of these different scenarios. Now, it's important to point out that not everything that would be potentially beneficial about doing something like this is necessarily quantifiable. And so we talk about that in the report. Just three things to highlight. One is the particular importance of business travelers. Now, we do have data that business travelers are more likely to stay in hotels than other kinds of visitors, they stay longer and they spend more money, but then there are more intangible benefits that they bring. Things like business travelers are likely to have maybe more influence than the average traveler over things like let's say corporate relocation decisions. You know, it's hard to quantify, but there is a certain importance in exposing this group of individuals to Austin, what it has to offer. Another important area that is

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tough to quantify but is very real is this idea of filling the midweek gap. What I mean by that is in and around downtown, we have a lot of restaurants and bars and nightspots and music venues, and generally speaking, they are packed to the gills on Friday and Saturday nights, and you know, perhaps even Thursday nights, but conventioners are very important in filling up those slower Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights. That's just something to think about. Then finally, hospitality employment as Dr. Shear mentioned at the beginning. Tourism is unusually important in the five-county Austin metropolitan region in terms of its share of employment and as he noted, remarkably, that share has only gone up as our economy has expanded like crazy since the year 2000. It's also important to think about, you know, who has those jobs and what those jobs offer. The hospitality jobs, two things about them. One, in our modern economy, more and more and more good jobs require a college education. Well, hospitality employment offers a lot of opportunities that don't necessarily require that, and a lot of those jobs have move-up potential, particularly in the large hotels, there are many people who might make a whole career working for a large hotel that feeds off of convention center visitation. So when we, you know, we try to use very conservative assumptions and look at how many jobs might be spun off of our different convention center extension scenarios, and you can see in the upside case, we got as many as almost 1,000, you know, permanent full-time jobs. This is including the indirect

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and induced job growth. I don't want to bore you with all the technical details but the basic idea is if a new downtown -- new convention visitor comes to Austin and they spend money at a hotel, well, some of that money ends up in the form of a paycheck of hotel workers and those hotel workers then spend money and that circulates in the economy. That's what we're accounting for there. And then another thing to think about with hospitality employment is where the people who hold those jobs live and here's a map. The darker the blue, the greater the concentration of those jobs. You see that there are quite a few of them in some of the lower income parts of south, southeast Austin, also north of 183 and far northwest Austin. You know, I realize that the numbers here are very small, but if we just, you know, when we're talking about economic benefit, it is important to step back and look at the bigger picture of what downtown means to the city from a fiscal standpoint. So what you're looking at here the pale gray bar shows the increase in absolute terms of property tax revenues contributed to the city of Austin by downtown, by the CBD, then in the darker blue bars, the shorter ones shows the increase in percentage contribution. The remarkable thing is ye of course the absolute amount of dollars that downtown's contributing to the city coffers has gone up a whole lot since roughly ten years ago, I mean, we all know that, but what's more remarkable is the proportion shot up. It's gone up from about 6% ten years ago to about 9% now. So downtown is important and it's getting more important. It's like a giant cash register for the city in many ways, and

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that speaks to the importance of attending to the quality of the experience of being in town through things like place making. Convention center district would be one possible way to get there. But that of course brings up the question of how would one way for such a thing. To address that, I turn it over to the doctor. >> Okay. Good morning. I'm Greg Holman. I teach finance and real estate at the McCombs school. They brought me up last to talk to about how would the city or how could the city pay for a project like this. What I've learned in my work on this project over the last year is that convention center expansions in Texas can be financed with hotel taxes and that certainly looks like a good option for the city of Austin if they choose to go forward with this. The code, the tax code allows cities to pledge hotel tax revenue to a bond issue so that the cities can use, you know, the capital markets to borrow the money necessary to do an expansion like this and then pay those bond holders back over time with hotel tax revenues collected over time. Our report documents -- we spent a lot of time documenting the health of the hotel business here in Austin and I think from anyone who has been here the last five or ten years and watched these big, beautiful hotels show up, the hotel business is doing very well in Austin, and Austin collects a decent amount of hotel tax revenue. But the use of that hotel tax revenue is pretty tightly restricted by the tax code. So I wanted to show you a couple of points from the tax code that I came across that speak to how that money is restricted. So point a shows that states

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that -- and these are quotes right out of chapter 351, subchapter B of the Texas state tax code -- and point a says revenue from the municipal hotel occupancy tax may be used only to promote tourism and the convention and hotel industry, and then a little farther in the code, it then expands upon that to say revenue derived from the tax authorized by this chapter shall be expended in a manner directly enhancing and promoting tourism and the convention and hotel industry as permitted by section a above there, and then it pretty directly states that revenue may not be used for the general revenue purpose or general governmental operations of a municipality. So while this is a large sum of money that comes into the city of Austin, that money is not available for just anything the city of Austin wants to spend it on. That money is restricted to tourism-related assets like convention centers. The other thing that I learned in looking at the tax code and hotel taxes is that the tax code actually includes an incentive for cities to expand convention centers that is right in the code, and this is the section, the same kind of section of the code that I was looking at, but the code includes an incentive which allows cities to increase the hotel tax rate from the current 15% up to 17% to support and I have the quote up there, the construction of an expansion of an existing convention center facility. So right now, the hotel tax rate in the city of Austin is 15%. If the city of Austin were to embark on a project which expanded an existing convention center facility, the code then would allow the city to increase the tax rate from 15% to 17%, so give it an additional 2% of hotel tax revenue. Now, one of the nice benefits of that for the city of Austin is that the code allows the city of

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Austin to spend 15% of the hotel tax revenue on arts and historic preservation. It's my understanding from discussions with city staff that the city of Austin has maxed out its current 15% allocation on arts and historic preservation spending from the current hotel tax revenue streams so if the city were to expand the convention center and use this additional 2%, then that 2% then, the city could hit that with 15% and it would provide additional spending on arts and historic preservation as a result of adding the 2% in support of the construction of an expansion of a convention center. Look, so my part was short here and I'm going to wrap it up quickly. It was pretty clear to me that the Texas state tax code provides a way for cities in the state of Texas to pay for tourism-related assets such as the convention center with hotel taxes. And while there are certainly government programs that everybody has seen that have been characterized as public spending for private benefit, when the federal government bailed out the big banks in 2009, that was certainly, had some of that characteristic of let's take public tax money and give it to private businesses. This to me appears to be the opposite of that. This to me looks like a way where the tax code allows the city of Austin to go to a rticular set of private businesses, the hotels, and take money from those hotels and then spend that money on public projects like this that have public benefits. That is really all my message to you today on the financing. I'm going to turn it over now to Dean almay to finish this up. >> This piece is going to be sort of short, but just by way

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of wrapping up the potential of the last scenario, a couple last slides. Here's the existing condition. Here are some of the initiatives going on around the existing facility tied to public place making that is the expansion of the project connect network, the construction of the capital gateway, the potential refurbishment of brush park, the possibilities of reconnect Austin, the increased coverage of the great streets plan which is a significant part of all of this, and the redevelopment of waller creek. If you were to sort of implement let's say scenario 4, you would begin to get a spatial condition like this at the ground where we all of a sudden get a kind of festival street along Trinity, we begin to get connectivity of second street through to all the way to palm park and even potentially into east Austin. And if we were to look at scenario 5, we can see how that even opens up a whole new kind of orientation of the convention center facility out into facing waller creek and out to the east as well as sort of negotiating high speed rapid transit along Trinity without conflicts. So I'm going to leave you with this. This is the home of the report which you can download from the center for sustainable development, and with that, I really would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to do this work and to produce this report for you. Thank you very much. [ Applause ]

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>> Mayor Adler: While we have everybody here, are there any clarifying questions people want to ask? From the dais? Again, not to get into pros and cons but clarifying questions I think would certainly be in order. >> The report mentions the upward mobility of the hotel industry. Is there -- I didn't see an asterisk that refers to where that information came from. Anecdotaly I have not found that to be true.

>> It's a general point that we made in the report. We don't have specific figures on it. >> Okay. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Any further questions? Obviously very complete report. Thank you. Certainly a lot for everybody to take and digest. Just the conversation itself is really exciting when you start talking about place making in a city like ours. It's certainly a quadrantive town that has a lot of potential because it's not built out yet. Council member ka sar? >> Casar: Thank you so much. I don't think I can ask a question without first saying thanks. I'm impressed on your ability to be upside down below the microphone on top of the impressiveness of the report. I think it's really exciting to see some options where third street comes through or second street comes through. I might have misread it but is there not -- what are the barriers, the potential of both streets being able to punch through, be they pedestrian or not? >> We test that in scenario 5 as pedestrian connections. There are a couple sort of infrastructural things. First of all, if you get the exhibition halls off the ground,

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you increase the ability for porosity in second street and third street. That is because while, you know, I tried to make the point that the current generation of convention centers does not necessarily need one big 500,000 square foot hall, there are certain minimum dimensions that you want in terms of sort of direct large scale rooms. One of those is approximately 125,000 square feet, you know, for certain kinds of events. That means that if you put that at the ground, you are going to necessarily cut off those sort of -- that grid. But if you raise that up in the air and sort of service it from below, et cetera, you actually have the potential of connecting those streets through in various ways. The building will, as I tried to show in some of the drawings, span over the street, most likely, but at least you will have hopefully some well-scaled passage. >> Casar: So you actually do have second and third both going through? >> Yes. >> Casar: I must have missed that. I won't ask that question because I actually asked about it when we walked in so I'm not going to ask you a fake question that I already know the answer to, but it sounded like there was some interesting debate about what to name the front of the report which to me I think is a really interesting question, because to me, you are right now, we have a convention center district. We have six blocks of nothing but convention center but in many ways, I think what this report shows is actually how it would become a neighborhood or a district, be it the south waller neighborhood or the palm school district or railyard district. I think it's a good question for us to be asking what this should really be called because I think you all have presented a report that is -- does the opposite of what I think the title page says it does, but I'm pleased. >> Real quickly, there actually is a legal convention center

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district which is more than those six blocks. It's actually defined, you can find it in gis data of the city and it was essentially, my understanding, sort of established when the original 1992 facility was set up. No one could tell me, however, what it means. There wasn't a tax base associated, there was sort of nothing precisely associated with that as a legal definition. So we are actually suggesting that maybe we

expand that to, you know, the southeast quadrant. >> Mayor Adler: Yes, council member. >> Have you seen other communities that closed off street grid connections and then reopened them with other convention centers that are like ours and if there's any more revitalization benefit, if people actually change their behavioral patterns of transportation when you open those grids back up? >> Not with streets. I know the new Nashville sort of addition tries to pay close attention to the street grid in terms of porosity but not for cars. The best definition that I heard about traffic is it's a gas, not a liquid, which means that it expands and contracts to the available area that it can move in, you know. So I think traffic will move around and take whatever is sort of made available to it. I think pedestrian connections on let's say a reinvigorated grid would likely happen if, and only if, there were, a, destinations and B, activity along the route. So that's a really critical part of it. >> That's great. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Yes, council member Flanigan? >> Flannigan: I'm interested in

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the public/private parts. These seem to be segregated from the convention space. Are there examples or specific barriers that would prevent towers to sit on top of as opposed to the side of? >> Cost and construction techniques. While it's true that many of the more recent exhibition halls have given up on the let's say agenda of being column-free, maximizing the flexibility of the exhibition halls is really important. Towers are heavy. And they have big feet. They want to penetrate through anything below them so there actually are construction benefits to looking at these as they can be connected as a single facility, but there are construction benefits to letting the different sort of constructional systems be slightly autonomous. >> Mayor Adler: Council member tovo? >> Tovo: First of all, thank you very much. I think this is a really interesting report. I want to also extend my thanks to our community member who suggested it. I think this is really -- will really enhance our decision making about this. I appreciate all of the work. I have quite a few questions that I'm going to just ask a couple here today. Until we run out of time. One of the things I really appreciate is you have provided some -- you have provided some ideas about how if we do expand the convention center, it can be done in such a way that is transformative and in some way restorative of some of the earlier choices that while they made sense at the time, are really not the best for our urban landscape. So I think that's really helpful. I also appreciate some of the

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best practices you have highlighted from other places in terms of both uses that brought the public in and I would like to hear more of them. There may be more, I didn't have an opportunity to read the appendix, the documents in the appendix as closely as I might want to so maybe there's additional examples in there. That seems to me an area where we really need to look. But I did want to ask about a couple quick things. How do -- given what you are talking about with regard to -- well, let me ask this one first. The -- some of the scenarios I think would be most successful are really in two parts. The restorative part of that in terms of transforming that area downtown really happens in the second with the partial demolition in the second piece. So if you had to pick a one stop scenario, what do you think --

which is the scenario that gets the most accomplished in that first stage in terms of restoration of the street grid, interaction with waller creek as well as space? >> I'm going to jump in. That's one of those, that is a discussion point but again, to us not making recommendations in the decision making process, with every ounce of respect and trying to walk away from that, we are going to walk away from that. >> Tovo: Okay. Very good. Maybe we will have an opportunity to sit down and really go through these scenarios a little more closely because some of those, I think the benefits accrue most dramatically with that second phase. With the kind of work we do, I think we would just really have to be sure if we undertake a first phase that there would be a second phase if that's part of where we are gaining those benefits. Can you talk a little about the financing and I think, I'm not sure if our -- >> Yes. I will try to cover it for you. >> Tovo: I want to get a little

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sense of the presentation here today talked about the hot tax and how it could be expanded with that 2%. There was a statement within here about the costs not likely being covered by hot and the increased sales. So I wonder if you could help us understand how it's working in places like Nashville or some of the other convention centers you have talked about, what their economics look like in terms of the sales and any other increases, how they have mapped to the cost. I think I read that Nashville's is actually planning to be self-funded through their increased food sales. Is that working? How else are they paying for their costs? Are they operating at a net loss? >> So unfortunately, we just lost the team member who would address that question. But I can say the statement that we had in the report, and I hope it was clear, was that the incremental sales and hot taxes simply generated by the convention, incremental convention attendees on their own would not be enough to finance the facility but the key Dr. Holman was talking about is really this unblocking mechanism where the 2% increase would be apply to all visitation in Austin. That's what makes it possible for that to cover the cost. >> Tovo: I think I do need to understand that in greater detail. I also have a question that -- >> I can try. >> Tovo: Mayor, I think is now a good time? Should I yield to somebody else and come back to it? >> Mayor Adler: Let's come back to you. Want to see if there's a question? >> My question is, what you were saying, the southern part of the convention center is almost like dead space because it's not being used as much. What would you propose or did

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you see anything that if we do put open second street through there, what would happen to the southern part of the convention center? Would you recommend opening it up to retail so that we can have more traffic through there? >> Scenario 4.2, which you are referring to, basically on the north side, you would have a new entrance to the facility. So it would face second street. The new sort of urban square that would take the half block that's at the intersection of waller creek and second street, I saw that as a new kind of real public plaza. The closest thing that we have in the city of Austin right now is perhaps the space at the center of Seaholm and maybe the west mall on the university campus. We

don't actually have a lot of really robust, active public places in the city that are surrounded by program. So the idea there is that the block to the south, the kind of public/private partnership block would most likely have retail and cafes and other sorts of things to try and activate that space and make it a real sort of living room. With all the density coming online around there, we need public space badly to kind of push back against that. >> Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Yes, council member pool? >> Pool: Hi. Thanks. Thanks for coming today to give us an overview of the report. I think all of us have been really looking forward to it. This may be in the realm of speculation and it may not be part -- it may not be a question that you can answer so feel free to tell me if you can't. Right now, one of the pinch points, you were talking about pinch points earlier, is whenever there's a load in and a load out and whenever a convention opens, there's people trying to get into downtown, if

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the normal commute happens to be in whatever mode they're on past the convention center, it's really difficult to get by and it slows down people's access to where it is they need to go. With a change to the convention center, a reorientation potentially, I agree with you about the first street, it's really bad. The Cesar Chavez aspect of it. The loading dock right now faces on to red river which is curious, because that eastern side also gives access to waller creek. So just from a content and design and orientation perspective, knowing that you have big vehicles that have to come in, I understand they are right now being ferried from a location north of 183 on smaller trucks to come downtown, how does this new approach that you all are talking about contemplate addressing the very real need for the load ins and load outs and have negligible impact on people trying to get to other locations or even into the convention center? >> So a couple things. First of all, whatever the ultimate result is of I-35, whether it's project connect or some other variant of that, that actually has to do with kreek reconnecting the urban grid across the corridor, plays a major role in this. Because I-35, the sort of embankments of I-35 are a major barrier to connectivity across. It pretty much only happens on fourth street down to Cesar Chavez. So that's a critical piece of any answer, I have to say. Second street can't really work as let's say a reconnected traffic artery for the grid, because the intersection of

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second street and red river actually conflicts with the creek corridor. So trying to bring, if you tried to bring second street for cars, all the way through the grid to connect it to red river, not really working so well. Then of course, the side of palm park with the fairmont and the loading, the ability of second street to connect through is already compromised by a whole set of sort of things, right. So you then also have project connect and you have the potential for rapid transit, high speed rapid transit coming up Trinity, right. So if that rapid transit is on the ground, on the surface of Trinity, then you have the ability to take phase one and phase two and connect them under the street, and connect the under cross of both phases together as a service component. Phase one has truck access off of San Jacinto necessarily, all the sort of iterations do. The interesting thing about phase two, both in scenario 4 and scenario 5, is that

service yard goes away and actually, between red river and the underground flood control tunnel, there is the space to have an access ramp to an underground service for the convention center. For a phase two of the convention center. That could work in either scenario 4 or scenario 5, but it cannot work in the existing facility the way it is. So one of the ideas of this was actually to try and resolve this conflict with the trucks. >> Mayor Adler: Council member alter? >> Alter: Thank you. I want to thank the team.

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When this was brought up and we had early conversations about what this might look like, I was really excited for the partnership. I hope that as a city, we can continue to take advantage of leveraging the expertise and find many new ways for the city and UT to work together. If we work together more, we can address many of the challenges that we face. I thought that one of the things that was really interesting were your insights about the plan that was before us from ginsler and the convention center and the shortcomings with respect to place making and restoring the grid and other things. I think that's really important as we move forward and I'm excited about this opportunity that might be created to rectify some of the challenges that have been created by the old convention center. I wanted to ask specifically about some of the public space opportunities. So you've talked a lot about the connectivity and the transportation grid and some of the outside spaces but I haven't heard a lot about the inside spaces and the ability for the community to access the inside spaces. So can you speak a little bit to how you're thinking about how our community can interface with the convention center, because there's nothing to say that we have to adopt a model of the convention center that only allows conventioners to take advantage of that space inside. We have a shortage of music and art venues in our city, we have an example right where we sit of a fabulous place that we have made that allows people to come and interact and take advantage of spaces which could be used by our public and by the conventioners, but I didn't hear that piece in your study. If you could speak to that. >> So couple things. First, a disclaimer. They're not buildings. They're propositions to test

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public space. Getting the major spaces of the convention center up off the ground frees up the ground for other uses, whether they be retail or other kinds of public spaces. I mean, the main difference between this room that we're in and retail is how it gets filled in, how the structure gets filled in, right. So you actually have the ability for all kinds of community uses. Scenario 5 is more explicit about that. It actually color-codes a whole area of the building that could be used for different kinds of community uses. It actually proposes a kind of new kind of theater and music venues and markets and all kinds of possible uses. But the base is that you have an entire ground floor that is freed from convention center-specific uses to negotiate how much of that might be retail, how much of that might be community venues, how much of that might be music venues. There are all kinds of potentials that could be had. Now, the one thing that probably is consistent, however, so retail frontages have the ability to be porous to the street so they can operate autonomously and independently. Things like big parks on the

roof, right, can be sort of great spaces but you have to go in the building to get to them. So they are, you know, of their nature, already you're going through some sort of let's say semi-public, semi-private thresholds to get to those kinds of spaces. So your best opportunities are connect the streets and activate the streets with public uses at the ground level. >> Alter: Thank you. I will be really interested to see how this evolves, as we bring the public into the convention space. One other part of that is we

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talked a lot of public/private partnerships but we have a severe need for city office space. To the extent we already own that land or we are doing eminent domain for this project, to what degree did you consider city office space as one of the options in terms of the use of the area that wouldn't be convention center? >> So scenario 5 is explicit about that. There's a million -- so we did do an inventory of city office space and the number that we were given was about 1.2 million square feet. We can get -- and like I say, we can expand these projects vertically. We can add more square footage. It's not fixed but in scenario 5 as modeled, we get a million square feet of potential office space there. Which could handle a significant portion of that demand. >> Alter: Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: We have time for a couple more questions. When we get the mic to you, talk about whatever happens next on this. There are a lot of questions that this presentation gives rise to because there are different competing or different elements that we can now talk about that are out there. The economics and the finances I think is something that probably is worthy of spending time on in the future. It seems counterintuitive to be talking about -- it's not so much, I gather from the comments, not so much the additional dollars that come from the additional tourists, but the fact that this allows you to unlock more revenue from the tourists that exist today if the convention center didn't have one person, but that is -- we need to understand that

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better and how that all interplays with whatever the constraints are. Does anybody have any additional questions before we close? Okay. >> Again, I just want to thank -- >> Mayor Adler: Go ahead. >> I just want to thank the university. This was an incredible partnership and as has been echoed by the mayor and council, the ways in which we can continue to build up that in the future, I'm really excited about. Obviously, this was a presentation and really understanding what was all in it is going to take some time for us to digest. I think that a logical next step is, as I go around this coming week and have my one-on-ones with each of you, hearing from you about what additional questions you may have, that might help curate, if you will, a work session that would be in the future, whether it's on the finances, whether it's on additional clarifying questions that we might have for the university as part of this study, but I could certainly see after having those conversations with each of you, what areas we would want to explore further. So I look forward to continuing to talk to you about that. Then the university has graciously allowed us to say if there are opportunities for additional one-on-ones or ways that they can come and clarify anything that was in the report, they are willing to do that. So really just want to extend my



thanks and appreciation for everything that you did to lead to this report, and look forward to continuing talking about it with the mayor, council and the community in the future. >> Mayor Adler: All right. Just to close, again, on behalf of council and the community, I want to say thank you. This is just really exciting stuff, you know, with the several hundred million dollar investment on waller creek, the prospect of being able to tie that west into the city is just really exciting. Thank you so much. Thanks for the offer to meet with us. At 10:48, we will declare this meeting adjourned. Thank you. [ Applause ]

[10:48:45 AM]