




## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor and City Council Members

**From:** Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager 

**Date:** July 31, 2019

**Subject:** Work program for Palm District Plan

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On May 23, 2019, Austin City Council voted to approve Resolution No. 20190523-029 (Resolution). The Resolution covered many topics within the Palm District, including the Palm School, Rainey Street, the Fifth Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor, the Convention Center expansion, and a district planning process. This memo covers the district planning process, in particular the direction to the City Manager to present a work program for the Palm District planning process and any necessary resources to develop the plan.

The City Manager has appointed me as the Executive Lead for this project. And, I've selected Stevie Greathouse, Program Manager for the Planning and Zoning Department, as the Project Lead who will have day-to-day responsibilities for coordinating and completing project activities associated with the project. The preliminary work program for this project was done in coordination with key staff from the Convention Center, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development, Watershed Protection, Office of Real Estate Services, and Austin Transportation. Moving forward, the Palm District planning process will continue to be undertaken as a joint effort bringing together expertise across the multiple departments who are involved in placemaking activities in the area, as well as the expertise of additional external stakeholders identified in the work program.

Attached to this memo is a work program for the Palm District Master Plan. We do not anticipate that additional resources are needed to complete this project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Stevie Greathouse.

**cc:** Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
City Manager's Executive Team  
Jerry Rusthoven, Assistant Director, Planning and Zoning Department  
Stevie Greathouse, Program Manager, Planning and Zoning Department

## WORK PROGRAM FOR PALM DISTRICT PLANNING PROCESS

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**Purpose.** The Palm District planning process would engage stakeholders to develop a comprehensive, focused small area plan for an area of downtown Austin which includes Palm School, Palm Park, Brush Square, the ESB-MACC, the Convention Center, the Rainey Street Historic District, the Downtown Station, and portions of Waller Creek and the Fifth Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor. The primary deliverables from this planning process would include:

- Amendments to the *Downtown Austin Plan* to create a new Palm District
- Development of the *Palm District Plan* as an attachment to the *Downtown Austin Plan* and *Imagine Austin*
- Amendments to existing *Waller Creek District Master Plan* and *Core/Waterfront District Plan* and other existing master plans as needed for consistency, and as directed in the resolution
- Amendments to the Land Development Code as needed to implement the *Palm District Plan*, including possible creation of one or more regulating plans

**Background.** The Palm District has a rich social, cultural, and built history, and is currently a dynamic area of downtown that is likely to undergo additional transformation as the City collaborates with stakeholders to improve Waller Creek, to address connectivity and community needs in the Rainey area, to preserve the Palm School, to develop the Fifth Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor, and to expand the Convention Center. The area has been the focus of many recent public planning initiatives including:

- Rainey Street Area Rezoning (2004)
- Waller Creek District Master Plan (2010)
- Downtown Austin Plan (2011)
- Waller Creek Design Plan (2012)
- Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Initiative (2013)
- Downtown Austin Wayfinding Master Plan (2013)
- Republic Square Master Plan (2013)
- Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Master Plan (2018)
- Capital Metro Project Connect Vision (2019)
- Brush Square Master Plan (2019)
- UT Center for Sustainable Development Analysis of Scenarios for Convention Center Expansion (2019)
- The Austin Core Transportation Plan including the Rainey Street Mobility Study (Underway)

As described in the University of Texas at Austin Center for Sustainable Development Analysis:

- The Austin Convention center is a linchpin in the city's downtown and overall economy.
- Austin's downtown has a shifting center. The Convention Center is no longer on the eastern edge of the urban core—today, it is better described as lying near the center.
- The Convention Center and the Palm District as a whole occupy a connection point between important urban corridors.

- The location of the Convention Center presents the city with a strategic opportunity to link together many ongoing projects into an entire network of active public places. Redevelopment strategies for the Convention Center will need to recognize the problems and opportunities surrounding the new nexus and strive to resolve the conflicts inherent with competing interests and initiatives.

**Scope.** The Palm District planning process will create a new *Palm District Plan* as an attachment to the *Downtown Austin Plan* and *Imagine Austin* and would address the following elements:

- Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources
- Activities and Uses
- Density and Design
- The Public Realm
- Transportation and Parking
- Utilities and Infrastructure
- Leadership and Implementation

At a minimum, the Palm District planning process will be significantly informed by and impact the future evolution of Palm School, Palm Park, Brush Square, the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, the Convention Center, the Rainey Street Historic District, the Downtown Station, and portions of Waller Creek and the Fifth Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor.

The Palm District Planning process will also be informed by past planning efforts and current initiatives in the areas, including the Austin Core Transportation Plan including the Rainey Street Mobility Study, and analysis of Convention Center expansion.

The Palm District will be evaluated to identify opportunities for coordination across initiatives and to identify potential areas of conflict. Recommendations will be designed to enhance existing plans and to maximize synergies among the various initiatives and components of the Palm District.

The Palm District Planning process may also include modifications to the existing Waller Creek District Master Plan and implementation strategies as directed by the resolution.

The Palm District planning process will be led by the Planning and Zoning Department in coordination with and involving significant participation from several City Departments including the Convention Center, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Watershed Protection, Austin Transportation, and the Communications and Public Information Office.

**Engagement.** The Palm District engagement process will involve stakeholders representing the Palm District as a whole, as well as stakeholders representing and impacted by various identified projects, including but not limited to:

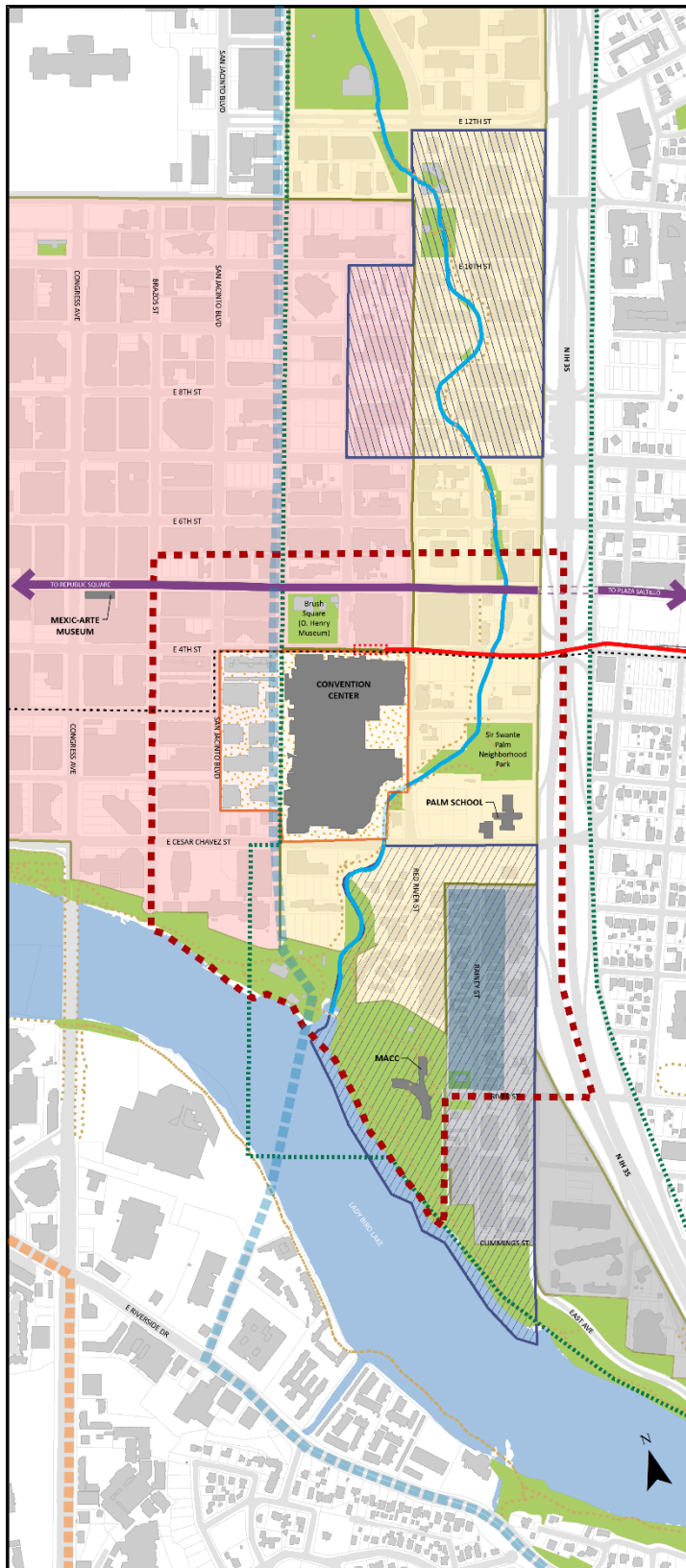
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| • The Red River Cultural District  | • The East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood Plan Contact Team |
| • The Raza Roundtable              | • The Rainey Business Coalition                        |
| • The Rainey Neighbors Association |  |

- The Town Lake Neighborhood Association
- The Austin History Center Association
- The Greater Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Austin Leadership
- Hispanic Advocates Business Leadership of Austin
- The Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association
- Mexic-Arte
- La Peña
- The Tourism Commission
- Capital Metro
- AIA Austin
- Preservation Austin
- Visit Austin
- The ESB-MACC
- Waller Creek Conservancy
- Downtown Austin Alliance
- Our Austin Story
- The Trail Foundation
- Travis County Historical Commission
- Travis County
- The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce
- Housing Authority of the City of Austin (Lakeside Apartments)
- Movability
- East Sixth Street Public Improvement District
- Relevant City of Austin Boards and Commissions
- Project Connect Advisory Net
- Residents, Businesses, and other Community Groups

The Communications and Public Information Office will support the Planning and Zoning Department with meeting design, facilitation, and engagement analysis.

**Resources and Project Budget.** The Palm District Planning Process will be coordinated by the Planning and Zoning Department and will rely on a multi-departmental team that includes staff support from Planning and Zoning, Convention Center, Parks and Recreation, Austin Transportation, Economic Development, Watershed Protection, Real Estate, and the Communications and Public Information Office. The Planning and Zoning Department does not anticipate needing additional staffing resources to support this effort at this time.

**Boundaries.** In order to provide a starting point for this effort, a preliminary planning area boundary for the Palm District has been identified. The Palm District area includes portions of three existing designated districts of the Downtown Austin Plan: Core/Waterfront District, Waller Creek District, and Rainey District. We anticipate that the boundaries of the Palm District will be refined during the course of the planning process based on identified planning needs. The initial boundaries of the Palm District are indicated in red on the attached Palm District Context map as “Palm District Boundary.”



## Palm District Context Map

Red Boundary = Suggested Boundary for Palm District based on direction from Council Resolution. Boundary could continue to shift over the course of the planning process.

Note: Planning process will engage areas beyond the boundary, and additional planning activities could occur outside of the proposed boundary (e.g. the resolution provides direction to amend the existing Waller Creek District Master Plan)

### LEGEND

- - - - - Palm District Boundary (Proposed)
- Convention Center Study Boundary
- Key Buildings
- Lady Bird Lake
- - - - - Lance Armstrong Bikeway
- Parks and Trails**
  - Parks and Squares
  - - - - - PARD Trails and Urban Trails
- Existing and Proposed Cultural Districts and Neighborhood Associations**
  - 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor
  - Red River Cultural District
  - Rainey Neighbors Association, Inc.
  - Rainey National Register Historic District
- Downtown Austin Plan**
  - Rainey Street District
  - Waller Creek District
  - Core/Waterfront District
- Project Connect**
  - MetroRail Red Line (Existing)
  - - - - - Blue Line (Proposed)
  - - - - - Orange Line (Proposed)
  - - - - - Red Line Downtown Station (Future)
- Waller Creek Initiative**
  - Waller Creek
  - - - - - Waller Creek District (Joint Development Agreement)

**Timeline and Tasks.** This preliminary timeline will be refined as staff across multiple city departments begin work during Task 1, Pre-Planning.

FALL 2019	WINTER 2019-2020	SPRING 2020	SUMMER 2020	FALL 2020	WINTER 2020-2021	SPRING 2021
TASK 1: Pre-Planning						
		TASK 2: Visioning				
			TASK 3: Active Planning			
				TASK 4: Draft Review		
						TASK 5: Plan Adoption
		TASK 6: External Stakeholder Engagement				