

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, in March 2014, the Austin Convention Center Department consulted with the Gensler firm to craft a long-range plan to address the Convention Center's future needs; and

WHEREAS, the City Council passed Resolution No. 20141211-218, directing the City Manager to work with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) so a Technical Assistance Panel could review options for both increasing and maintaining the Convention Center's current footprint; and

WHEREAS, the resulting ULI report recommended any expansion create a "visionary" district that would include money for projects such as Brush Square, the Red Line Station, and Waller Creek; and

WHEREAS, in June 2017 the Visitor Impact Task Force recommended, among other things, the Austin Convention Center be expanded to the west (leaving Trinity Street open), provided the expansion be integrated with uses such as street-level restaurant/retail space to activate the area, affordable housing and other residential units, and/or office space that could offer the possibility of reducing project costs; and

WHEREAS, the Visitor Impact Task Force further recommended the expansion of the Convention Center be integrated with other uses, which would contribute to street activity and a healthy urban fabric in Downtown's southeast quadrant and repair the urban framework in the immediate vicinity; and

WHEREAS, on May 13, 2019, the Tourism Commission recommended the City Council approve and implement the recommendations of the Visitor Impact Task Force as a guiding framework for the expansion of the Convention Center; and

WHEREAS, in November of 2015, the City Council approved Resolution No. 20151112-033, which approved the Austin Convention Center’s long-range plan, with the additional direction that the Economic Opportunity Committee provide recommendations on several proposals and considerations, including the enhancement of Brush Square, Palm Park, Palm School (in coordination with Travis County), and green space initiatives (in coordination with the Waller Creek Conservancy); and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 20170928-052 directed the City Manager to explore funding options for improvements to Downtown Austin including the expansion of the Convention Center; and

WHEREAS, in April 2019, the University of Texas Center for Sustainable Development released its report, “Frameworks for Placemaking: Alternative Futures for the Austin Convention Center District,” which outlined multiple redevelopment scenarios for public and Council consideration; and

WHEREAS, the report recommended the City “move away from ad-hoc planning, and instead think holistically and strategically about the future of the entire area surrounding the convention center”; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 the City Council approved Resolution No. 20190523-029 creating the Palm District Planning Initiative and directed the Manager to “re-envision the Convention Center as an active, community-oriented civic building that enhances the culturally rich fabric of the Palm District;” and

WHEREAS, the Palm District resolution recommended an initial design for a Convention Center expansion based on the UT Center for Sustainable Development Study’s Scenario 5, which not only included additional convention space but also removed existing elements to create and enhance public space,

place-making, and connectivity within the Palm District, especially along Second Street, Waller Creek, and Palm Park; and

WHEREAS, in April 2021, the City exercised the right to end negotiations for a western expansion of the Austin Convention Center and announced its intention to re-evaluate expansion possibilities within its current site; and

WHEREAS, Convention Center staff also expressed their intent that such an expansion use a smaller footprint and realize the goals of the UT Study, the Convention Center Master Plan Update, and the Palm District Resolution to redevelop the space into an active, community-oriented civic building that enhances the culturally rich fabric of the eastern quadrant of Downtown; and

WHEREAS, the Convention Center is located in a convergence of key community assets, including Brush Square, the 5th Street Mexican American Heritage District, Palm School and Palm Park, Waterloo Greenway, the Rainey Street Historic District, a future Project Connect underground station, and the potential future redevelopment of IH-35 and its associated surface improvements and amenities; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

That the City Council affirms its commitment to the planning principles documented in Resolution No. 20190523-029, the Palm District Planning Initiative.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to use a portion of the Austin Convention Center's Capital Budget to partner with an appropriate entity with expertise in sustainable development to host a design competition to solicit the most innovative ideas in programming and placemaking for a new convention center that would be,

like its companion civic building to the west, the Austin Central Library, a landmark of great distinction, a bustling and vital public gathering place, and a point of pride for the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to initiate the work directed by this Resolution immediately returning to the City Council no later than July 29, 2021, with a proposed competition framework, required design elements, and timeline.

ADOPTED: _____, 2021 **ATTEST:** _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk

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