



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number: 21-2614**

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**Agenda Item Number:** 1.

**Agenda Date:** 4/7/2021

**In Control:** City Council B Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** City Manager's Office

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Lori Houston

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:**

Briefing on the Status of the Alamo Plan Reset and Amendments to the Ground Lease and Management Agreement Between the City of San Antonio and Texas General Land Office

**SUMMARY:**

This item provides a briefing on recent discussions and action by the Alamo Citizens Advisory Committee, Alamo Plan Management Committee, and Alamo Plan Executive Committee to update design assumptions in the Alamo Plan and amend the ground lease and management agreement between the City and Texas General Land Office.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

On October 15, 2015, City Council executed a cooperative agreement among the Texas General Land Office (GLO), Alamo Endowment Board, and the City of San Antonio regarding the Joint Master Plan for the Alamo and surrounding area. The Agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party as well as the management and oversight structure for the master plan's development and adoption. The Agreement created a six-member Management Committee that includes two representatives from each entity. Councilmember Rebecca Viagran and City Attorney Andy Segovia represent the City of San Antonio. The Agreement also created a two-member Executive Committee and appoints the Mayor of San Antonio and the Commissioner for the General Land Office.

The Cooperative Agreement identified the Vision and Guiding Principles developed by the Alamo Citizen Advisory Committee as the foundation for the Master Plan. The Alamo Citizen Advisory Committee includes 10 members appointed by the Mayor, 10 members appointed by the City Council member, 6 members appointed by the State, and 4 technical advisory members representing industry organizations. The Committee's role is to provide citizen feedback in an advisory capacity to the Management Committee on the development of the Alamo Plan to ensure it is in keeping with the Vision and Guiding Principles.

The Management Committee selected Preservation Design Partnership (PDP) in association with San Antonio based Fisher Heck Architects and Grupo De Diseño Urbano (GDU) of Mexico to lead the Alamo master planning process. On May 11, 2017, City Council unanimously approved the Alamo Master Plan, which consists of five key concepts:

1. Restoration of the Church and Long Barrack.
2. Delineation of the historic footprint.
3. Recapture the Historic Mission Plaza and create a sense of reverence and respect on the historic battlefield.
4. Repurpose the Crockett Block, Woolworth, and Palace buildings into a world-class visitor center and museum

that tells the story of the Battle of the Alamo and over 300 years of layered history.

5. Create a sense of arrival to the site and enhance connectivity between the site and other public spaces.

City Council also provided conceptual approval for the restoration and relocation of the Cenotaph, closure of sections of Alamo and Crockett Streets, and the conveyance or lease of right of way necessary to reclaim the historic Plaza.

The approval of the Master Plan and conceptual approval of the specific site strategies was necessary to proceed with the next steps for the project which included the development of an interpretive plan. In December 2017, the Management Committee announced the selection of PGAV Destinations to lead development of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan and design of Alamo Plaza. The team also included Reed-Hilderbrand landscape architects and Cultural Innovations museum and cultural heritage consultants. The team first unveiled the Plan to the Alamo Citizens Advisory Committee and the public in May 2018.

The Plan proposed by the consultant team further developed the proposed strategies necessary to achieve the five key concepts in the Master Plan. The more prominent site strategies included:

- Closing and restricting sections of Alamo Street, Houston Street, and Crockett Street to pedestrian and emergency vehicles only;
- Repairing and relocating the Cenotaph within Alamo Plaza;
- Developing a new parade route that honors the complete history of the Alamo;
- Assessing the adaptive reuse for the Crockett, Palace, and Woolworth Buildings;
- Establishing a formal point of entry to the Plaza during museum hours; and
- Leasing to the GLO portions of the Street and Plaza necessary to recapture the Plaza.

On October 18, 2018, City of San Antonio City Council approved the ordinance authorizing the closing, vacating and abandoning sections of right-of-way located on Alamo Street, Alamo Plaza, and Houston Street; and limiting sections of right-of-way located on Alamo Plaza, Alamo Street, Blum Street, Crockett Street, and E. Houston Street to pedestrian traffic and emergency vehicles; and approving a ground lease and management agreement with the Texas General Land Office for property located in the historic Alamo mission footprint and property required for the development and management of the proposed Alamo visitor center and museum; and authorizing the negotiation and execution of all necessary documents related to the restoration and relocation of the Cenotaph within the Alamo Plaza area. City Council also approved the extension of the cooperative agreement through design and implementation of the Alamo Plan.

The lease agreement between the City and GLO for the operation of the Plaza defines the roles and responsibilities for each party. The term of the lease is for 50 years with two 25 year extensions. The GLO is responsible for the day to day operations of the Alamo Plaza to include custodial, programming, and security. The lease also defines the roles and responsibilities of each party as it relates to site strategies in the Plan. The GLO will:

- Ensure that the Plaza area shall remain open, accessible, and free of charge to the public.
- Ensure public access to the Alamo complex, the Church, the new Museum and the outdoor historic mission footprint through a main entry when the museum is open.
- Open two additional access/exit points during the Museum operating hours, if there is no Museum programming scheduled for the historic mission footprint or during times of high pedestrian activity.
- Provide high quality programming and services that enhances the historic and cultural significance of the site.
- Comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws including
  - Texas Health and Safety Code
  - State Antiquities Code
- Ensure that the design for the planned museum within the current footprint of the Crockett, Old Palace, and Woolworth buildings is reviewed by HDRC and approved by the THC.
- Ensure that Alamo Plan recognizes and interprets the historical significance of the Woolworth building in the Civil Rights movement.

Approval of the street closures and lease agreement was necessary to proceed with final design and implementation of the Alamo Plan. On December 18, 2019 the Historic and Design Review Commission approved design of Phase 1 of the Alamo Plan, which included the relocation of the Cenotaph, design of Alamo Plaza south of the historic mission footprint, and improvements to sections of Crockett Street and Bonham Street.

The Texas Historical Commission first considered a permit to repair and relocate the Cenotaph on January 28, 2020. They deferred action until their next quarterly meeting in March 2020. That meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. THC meetings resumed virtually for the rest of the year, but this item was not included on the agenda until September. The THC denied the permit for the Cenotaph repair and relocation on September 22, 2020.

#### **ISSUE:**

In the approved Alamo Plan, relocation of the Cenotaph was necessary to recapture the historic mission footprint, create a sense of arrival to the site from the south, and build a world class museum. Denial of the permit to relocate the Cenotaph has implications to the Alamo Plan and the ground lease and management agreement with the General Land Office. Both need to be amended if the project is to proceed. Mayor Nirenberg requested that the project partners consider three issues as they determine how to amend the Alamo Plan and lease: repurpose the Woolworth and Crockett Buildings, retain parades and cultural traditions in Alamo Plaza, and preserve Plaza access.

The Mayor presented his request to the Alamo Citizens Advisory Committee on March 8. The design team studied these issues and presented scenarios to the Alamo Citizens Advisory Committee in a workshop on March 24 and a public meeting on March 29. On March 31, 2021, the Alamo Citizens Advisory Committee approved five statements describing updated design assumptions for the Alamo Plan and a statement confirming that the proposed changes are still in alignment with the Vision and Guiding Principles and the 5 key concepts of the Alamo Master Plan. The six statements are:

1. The request to relocate the Cenotaph was denied by the Texas Historical Commission and therefore the Cenotaph will not move. The Cenotaph will be repaired. The repair plan will be presented to the Alamo Citizens Advisory Committee and submitted to the City's Office of Historic Preservation and the Texas Historical Commission for review and approval prior to initiating any repairs.
2. Alamo Plaza will accommodate events such as traditional and pre-existing events, ceremonies, and parades that are in alignment with the vision and guiding principles and have a cultural or historical tie to the site provided such activities provide the required reverence to the site.
3. The Historic Mission Footprint will not be lowered to its living surface to delineate the footprint. The Alamo Plaza and the Historic Mission Footprint will be delineated by different pavers or other similar means.
4. Managed access of the site will be limited to the Museum and Visitor Center, Church and Long Barrack, and the Gardens. The Alamo Plaza and the remainder of the Historic Mission Footprint will be open to the public with unrestricted access.
5. The street closures will be phased. Alamo Street from Houston to Crockett will be closed by June 1, 2021. Temporary closures of Alamo Street from Houston to Crockett will occur every weekend between April 15th and May 30th until its permanent closure on June 1, 2021. The remaining streets will be closed as required by construction of the Plaza.
6. The proposed changes described in Statements 1-5 are still in alignment with the Vision and Guiding Principles and the 5 key concepts approved in the Alamo Plan.

The City shared the concerns with the GLO and the Alamo Trust regarding the fate of the Crockett and Woolworth

Buildings. The GLO and the Alamo Trust are conducting a due diligence report to further identify the options for the buildings.

These statements were sent to the Alamo Plan Management Committee for consideration and if approved will be reflected in an amended and reinstated ground lease and operating agreement between the City and GLO. The minutes for each of these meetings is attached.

Staff also revised the City's approach to archaeology on city owned property included in the Alamo Plan. The City will initiate an archival investigation of the city owned property on the mission footprint. The scope of work will include a synthesis of all previous archaeological reports and other documentation that encountered human remains on the site and will investigate areas of interest that need further review. The city will establish a committee to provide oversight for the archival investigation that consists of city staff and consultants and the three members of the ACAC that represent the history and archaeology categories. The archival investigation and committee will inform a plan of action that will establish a process for communication, treatment, custody, and other items in the event of a discovery. The city will also establish an archaeology advisory committee to aid in development of the plan of action. The advisory committee will include representation from local descendant organizations and the six individuals on the Alamo Mission Archaeology Advisory Committee.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This item is for briefing purposes only. However, the City adopted Fiscal Year 2016 capital budget included \$17 million for the redevelopment of the Alamo Plaza and surrounding area. Additionally, the 2017 bond program includes approximately \$21 million for construction of facilities in support of Alamo area improvements and street improvements. The Texas Legislature approved \$31.5 million in 2015 and \$75 million in 2017 for the restoration of the Alamo and redevelopment of the surrounding area. They may consider an additional appropriation in 2021. The Alamo Trust is committed to raising private funds for implementation of the Alamo Plan. The public and private funding commitments will allow for the implementation of the Alamo Plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.