



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:** 17-3132

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**Agenda Item Number:** 4.

**Agenda Date:** 5/11/2017

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** City Manager's Office

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** City-Wide

### **SUBJECT:**

Alamo Master Plan

### **SUMMARY:**

Consideration of an extension to the Cooperative Agreement among the City of San Antonio, Texas General Land Office and the Alamo Endowment Board and approval of the Alamo Master Plan and conceptual approval of various components required for design and implementation.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

In 2012, the City completed a concept plan for the Alamo Plaza. The concept plan was developed by Project for Public Spaces (PPS) and made several recommendations for the Alamo Plaza regarding visitor orientation, interpretation, walkability, and activation. Additionally, the concept plan recommended that the City update the 1994 Alamo Plaza Study. The 1994 Study, which also made recommendations for improvements to the Alamo Plaza, provided a framework for the interpretation of the Alamo area with the primary goal of sharing the entire history of the site and its evolution.

On March 6, 2014, City Council established a 21 member Alamo Plaza Advisory Committee comprised of one member appointed by each City Council member and eleven members appointed by the Mayor. The Committee was charged with creating a vision and guiding principles for the redevelopment of Alamo Plaza and updating the 1994 Alamo Plaza Study. The Committee met 15 times, and all meetings were posted and open to the public. Community input was incorporated into the vision and guiding principles, which were approved by City Council on December 11, 2014.

The Advisory Committee also recommended that the City establish a partnership with the State of Texas and develop a master plan for the City-owned Alamo Plaza and State-owned Alamo Complex. On October 15,

2015, City Council executed a Cooperative Agreement among the Texas General Land Office (GLO), the Alamo Endowment Board, and the City of San Antonio for the development of the Alamo Master Plan. The execution of the Cooperative Agreement was less than 5 months after the designation of Mission de Valero and the 4 other Spanish Colonial Missions as a World Heritage Site.

According to the Cooperative Agreement, the foundation of the Alamo Master Plan must be the vision and guiding principles that were developed by the Alamo Advisory Committee and approved by City Council. The Agreement also created a six-member Management Committee that includes two representatives from each entity. City Manager Sheryl Sculley and Councilmember Roberto Treviño represent the City of San Antonio and the Management Committee. In March 2016, the Management Committee selected Preservation Design Partnership (PDP) through an international competitive process, to lead the master planning process. PDP in association with San Antonio-based Fisher Heck Architects and Grupo De Diseño Urbano (GDU) of Mexico City are the primary project leads and have assembled a team of experts to include Rialto Studio, Pape Dawson Engineers, Heritage Landscapes, and more to ensure the master plan is transformational and catalytic.

The Alamo Management Committee and the Master Plan Team continued the work of the Alamo Plaza Advisory Committee and conducted extensive community outreach over the past year to ensure that the Alamo's many stakeholders had ample opportunity to share ideas. They presented to City Council in June, November, and April and held 5 public meetings in August, November, April, and June to provide updates on the planning process and solicit feedback on the Master Plan. These meetings were also broadcasted on Facebook, and the recordings were made available on YouTube. Monthly briefings with the businesses surrounding the Alamo were also held to better understand their operational needs and concerns and the Alamo Citizen Advisory Committee remained engaged throughout the effort.

## **ISSUE:**

The Alamo Master Plan Management Committee and the Master Plan Team undertook the first ever systematic compilation of the history and archeological research of the physical development and evolution of the Alamo site from the arrival of the Spanish missionaries in 1724 to the present time. This work along with the vision and guiding principles developed by the Alamo Advisory Committee provided the foundation to develop bold and visionary ideas and concepts for the reimagining of the Alamo. Additionally, the key concepts identified in the Master Plan are in compliance with the standards for World Heritage sites.

Several of the ideas and plans were also recommended in the 1994 Alamo Plaza Study and 2012 Concept Plan. The Master Plan proposes 5 key concepts.

### **1. Restoration of the Church and Long Barracks.**

The Church and the Long Barracks must be restored. The Master Plan proposes an intense conservation program that would span over four years to address immediate concerns, undertake a wide range of tests to fully understand the mechanisms of deterioration and decay, develop methods for addressing them to create a long term program for the protection of this national treasure.

### **2. Delineation of the historic footprint.**

The Master Plan proposes to outline the historic footprint of the Alamo and reestablish its relationship to the Church and the Long Barrack through archeology and interpretation. An interpretation of the historic South Gate is a critical first step in allowing guests to properly understand the site. The Master Plan also proposes to provide a clear differentiation between the 1936 Garden and the compound by repurposing the 1936 Garden as a park for visitors and residents to enjoy.

### **3. Recapture the Historic Mission Plaza and create a sense of reverence and respect on the historic**

**battlefield.**

The Master Plan proposes that Alamo Street from Houston Street to Market Street and Crockett Street from Losoya Street to Bonham be closed to vehicular traffic. The Plan also proposes to interpret the acequia and lower the elevation of the Alamo Plaza to the living surface of the historic mission compound, which is 18 to 24 inches below the current elevation. This would also require the repair and relocation of the Cenotaph.

**4. Repurpose the Crockett, 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.**

These historic buildings have been purchased by the GLO. By preserving the facades and repurposing the interior of the buildings, the State will create a 135,000 square foot visitor center and museum including a rooftop garden and restaurant overlooking the Alamo. The museum will provide an extensive exhibit about the Battle of the Alamo and use technology to produce a visual representation of the site over its 300-year history. This museum will provide space needed to display thousands of Alamo artifacts, including those in the collection donated to the GLO by artist and historian Phil Collins. In total, there will be 8 acres dedicated to telling the story of the Alamo (Alamo Compound, Museum, Alamo Plaza, 1936 Garden). The Master Plan proposes to open the 1936 Garden to the public and replace the rock walls behind the Alamo with a welcoming enclosure and relocate all the programs and activities that currently occur in the Garden to the newly restored Alamo Plaza courtyard which will serve as an extension of the museum.

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

The closure of South Alamo creates a more dramatic approach for visitors that begins at Commerce Street and continues north along a landscaped, pedestrian-only paseo to the new South Gate entrance to the Alamo. This new approach together with landscaping and wayfinding improvements to Houston, Bonham, and Losoya streets will enhance connectivity between the Alamo and other historic landmarks including Hemisfair, La Villita, and Market Square. The site's connection to the San Antonio River will be enhanced with an interpretation of the acequia that once ran through Alamo Plaza. In addition to greater connectivity, the Master Plan proposes the closure of Crockett from Losoya to Bonham which will facilitate an additional 5 acres of public assembly space on the south side and east side of the Alamo Complex (Plaza De Valero, Crockett Street, Alamo Street, 1936 Garden). Connectivity to the Plaza from Houston Street needs to be developed during the design process.

City Council's approval of the Master Plan will also serve as conceptual approval of various components necessary for its design and implementation: (1) closure of vehicular traffic at Alamo Plaza from Houston Street to Market Street and Crockett Street from Losoya Street to Bonham; (2) conveying to the GLO the rights of way and parts of Alamo Plaza that are necessary to reclaim the Alamo Plaza courtyard, and to construct the new Alamo museum and visitors center, and (3) repair and relocation of the Cenotaph.

These items will require further review and action by various regulatory agencies including the Planning and Zoning Commissions, the Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC), and/or additional City Council action. Upon City Council approval of the Alamo Master Plan and conceptual approval of the various key components, City staff will initiate the processes required to complete these actions to include further traffic analysis and a connectivity study for the closure of Alamo Street and Crockett Street that will require Planning Commission consideration. City staff will also initiate the review of the current Alamo viewshed to determine what if any amendments are necessary and will present any amendments to the Zoning Commission for consideration prior to City Council approval.

Approval of the Master Plan is not approval of the design. Once the Master Plan is approved, the Management

Committee will proceed with the selection process for an architect(s) for the Plaza and Museum. The design will reflect the 5 key concepts identified in the Master Plan and will address details such as materials, porosity, placemaking, shade, and other important design features. Additional public meetings will be held and HDRC will provide design input for the Alamo Plaza and the improvements to the City-owned right-of-way prior to issuance of a building permit.

Taking into consideration public input to date, the design must incorporate more shade. Any trees that must be removed to accommodate the historic elevations will be replanted in the same location (or vicinity) to provide shade in the courtyard. The design will be porous and include additional access points. The 3.93 acre courtyard will continue to be a public gathering space for the community and host ceremonies and celebrations and the public will still be able to use the courtyard. The design will incorporate additional public assembly opportunities to include the 2.15 acre 1936 Garden and an additional 2.64 acres adjacent to the South Gate. More importantly, the design will include additional public input opportunities.

The Cooperative Agreement has been an outstanding success, resulting in an Alamo Master Plan that is strongly supported by the Alamo Management Committee. For the first time in the history of the Alamo, the City, the State of Texas and the private sector (the Alamo Endowment) came together through the Cooperative Agreement to reimagine a new vision for the future of the Alamo Complex and the Alamo Plaza Historic District. However, by its terms, the Cooperative Agreement will terminate upon adoption of the Alamo Master Plan. City staff recommends that the term of the Cooperative Agreement be extended to allow the three parties to continue their joint efforts to fully implement the Alamo Master Plan through this Agreement, which details and defines each party's role, expectations, rights, responsibilities and obligations in connection with the design and implementation of the approved Alamo Master Plan. Both the GLO and Alamo Endowment Board are supportive of the extension.

Approval of the Master Plan and approval of the City's continued participation in the Cooperative Agreement will also allow the Alamo Management Committee to continue developing an interpretative plan for the site and design for the visitor center and museum and surrounding area. The approval also extends the role of the Citizens Advisory Committee who will continue to provide input through design and implementation. City Staff will continue to solicit feedback throughout these processes and return to City Council for consideration of the following:

- 1) Closure of Alamo Street from Houston Street to Market Street and Crockett Street from Losoya Street to Bonham be closed to vehicular traffic; and
- 2) Conveyance to the State of Texas/GLO the public rights-of-way and parts of Alamo Plaza that are necessary to recapture the plaza courtyard.

Additionally, the Committee will continue to provide updates on the master plan effort and its implementation to City Council.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

If the Alamo Master Plan is not approved, the funding from the Texas Legislature will be delayed by 2 years and the opportunity to improve the visitor experience for locals and tourists will be in jeopardy.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The City adopted Fiscal Year 2016 and 2017 capital budgets included \$17 million for the redevelopment of the Alamo Plaza and the surrounding area. Additionally, the proposed 2017 Bond Program includes approximately \$21 million for construction of facilities in support of Alamo area improvements and street improvements

identified in the Master Plan. These funding commitments, together with the \$31.5 Million provided by the Texas Legislature in 2015, the pending funding request by GLO for \$75 million, and the Alamo Endowment's contributions will allow for immediate implementation of certain components of the master plan.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the Alamo Master Plan and conceptual approval of the following: (1) closing Alamo Plaza from Houston Street to Market Street and limiting its use to pedestrian access only; (2) closing Crockett Street from Losoya Street to Bonham and limiting its use to pedestrian access only; (3) repairing and relocating the Cenotaph; and (4) conveying the rights-of-way and parts of Alamo Plaza to the State of Texas/GLO that are necessary to reclaim the historic Plaza, to construct the new Alamo museum and visitors center and fulfill the vision and guiding principles call for “unified leadership under the management of a single steward.”

Staff further recommends approval of an extension of the Cooperative Agreement between the City, the State of Texas and the Alamo Endowment to provide for design and implementation of the Alamo Master Plan.