



The future development and success of the George R. Brown Convention Center cannot be fully realized without a broader commitment to the long-term success of the entire “convention district.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY THE VISION...

... for the future of the George R. Brown Convention Center (GRBCC) extends beyond the walls of the Convention Center and includes the businesses, residents, public agencies and other stakeholders of Houston’s downtown east end. The future development and success of the Convention Center cannot be fully realized without a broader commitment to the long-term success of the entire “convention district.”

The 2025 Plan illustrates a best-case scenario for the public/private development of the convention district, improvements to existing infrastructure

including Avenida de las Americas (ADLA) and, eventually, the future expansion of the GRBCC.

Houston’s Top Three Priorities

The GRBCC serves a wide variety of users throughout its annual events calendar including conventions, trade and consumer shows, and a variety of local public events. Professional organizations representing convention planners and meeting planners select locations based on the total package available within a community; cities compete on a “destination-basis” rather than a “facility-basis.”

Industry surveys have consistently identified the same top five factors in selecting a convention destination:

- Convention Facilities
- Hotel Package
- Attractions and Activities
- Transportation
- Safety & Security

In developing the 2025 Plan, analysis of the GRBCC's current package as well as that of its competitor cities identified three key areas in need of improvement for Houston to be competitive in today's market. In priority order, these include:

- Hotel Package
- Attractions and Activities
- Convention Facilities

Industry advisors and market analysis by consultants agree that Houston's convention district lacks the number of hotel rooms and hotel mix needed to compete with other cities. Exhibitors and industry experts in hospitality, meeting planning and tourism have repeatedly expressed concern about the lack of attractions (restaurants, bars/clubs, shopping, entertainment) within convenient walking distance to the GRBCC.

Hotels: The #1 Priority

Downtown Houston and the GRBCC lack what are considered positive draws for its competitor cities including attached and proximate hotel room supply.

The City of Houston and the GRBCC need 2,000 new hotel rooms in the convention district to remain competitive with the lodging capacity of other convention destination cities. There is an immediate need for at least 1,000 new rooms adjacent to or, preferably, attached to the Convention Center.

The 2025 Plan identifies proposed locations for future hotels nearby, adjacent and connected to the Convention Center. The undeveloped parcel between Rusk and Walker Streets (Block 99) is considered a prime hotel location due to its adjacency to Discovery Green and potential for connectivity via pedestrian bridge to the GRBCC. Others consider Block 99 to be ideally suited for a shared use

"You're under-hoteled..."

"The need for more hotel rooms is great..."

"Focus on hotels and amenities now!"

*Quotes from Industry Advisory Group Vision Session
December 2010*

residential tower and boutique hotel concept due to the marketability of Discovery Green to potential downtown residents. This, in turn, would make the parcel to its north (Block 100/120) the preferred site for a large convention center hotel. In either case, development of Blocks 99 and 100/120 as hotel sites supports the near- and long-term needs of the GRBCC and the convention district.



Industry Advisor Group Vision Session, December 2010



A hotel is planned for the corner of Polk Street and Chartres Avenue, one block southeast of the Convention Center. Final design and construction of this hotel is unknown at the time. To complete a ‘four-corners’ hotel concept desired by the GRBCC, the 2025 Plan includes a hotel on the corner of Rusk Street and Chartres Avenue, one block northeast of the Convention Center.

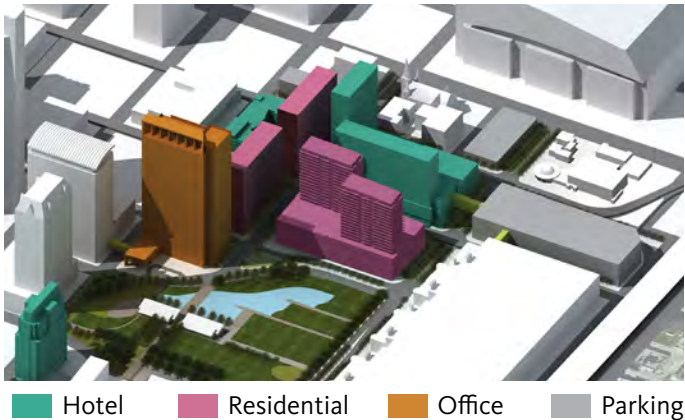
**Destination:
The Convention District**

How a city is perceived by out-of-town visitors is influenced by the part of the city they experience. Many conventioners and trade show attendees will only experience that part of Houston that exists between their hotel and the Convention Center. Currently, there are few opportunities for shopping, dining and entertainment near the GRBCC with the closest concentration of these activities located at the Houston Pavilions, 5-7 blocks away.



Examples of street-centric development

A primary consideration should be given to any and all future development in the vicinity of the GRBCC. Future hotels, residential buildings, office towers and parking garages should be designed to accommodate restaurants, bars and retail shops at the street level. This approach to the creation of a convention district should be aggressively encouraged by The City of Houston when negotiating with developers. Activating the streets with local residents, downtown workers, conventioners and visitors attracted by the shops, restaurants and en-



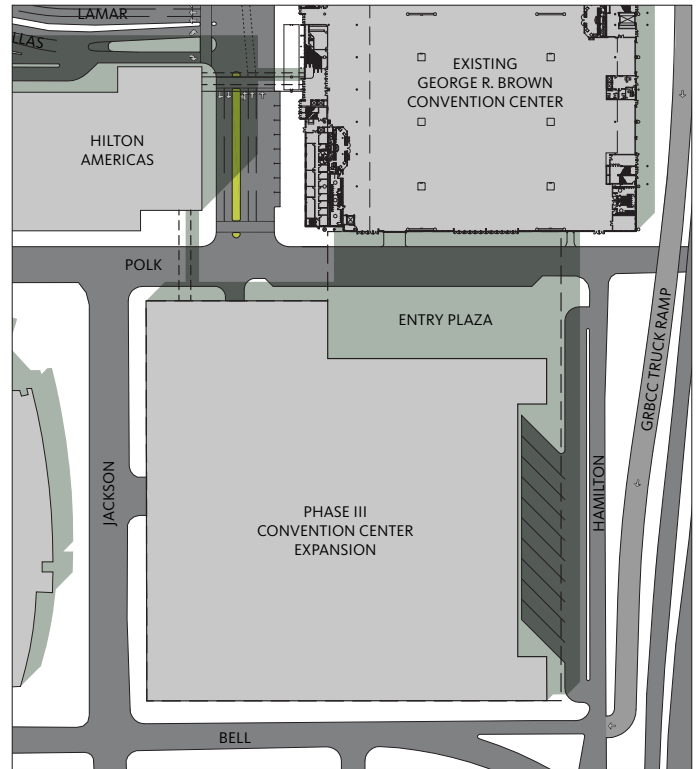
entertainment venues will create a vibrant, safe convention district that appeals to meeting planners and exhibitors.

Creating a destination that is anchored by Discovery Green will attract Houstonians and their entertainment dollars as well as provide a compelling story to convention and meeting planners for booking future events.

Convention Facilities: Phase III Expansion

Originally built in 1987 with Phase II expansion completed in 2003, the GRBCC is a well-managed, well-maintained facility. There are no plans for near term expansion of the Convention Center and there are a number of things that must happen first, including a significant increase in the convention center hotel room supply, before future expansion of the GRBCC facilities can be considered. However, now is the time to establish a general direction for future growth so that if and when the time comes to expand, the GRBCC is well-positioned to pursue a design solution that is best for both the Convention Center facility and the entire east downtown area.

After exploring a variety of options on both sides of US 59, future expansion is best accommodated on the four city blocks immediately south of the ex-



Plan of proposed GRBCC expansion existing GRBCC. The location, wedged between the GRBCC, US 59, the Hilton Americas Garage and Toyota Center is a difficult space for other commercial uses but is ideal for the expansion of exhibition and meeting space. The proposed Phase III will be physically connected to the existing Convention Center at both the concourse and upper floor levels with no impact to east-west traffic on Polk Street.

Activating the streets with local residents, downtown workers, conventioners and visitors attracted by shops, restaurants and entertainment venues will create a vibrant, safe convention district that appeals to meeting planners and exhibitors.

Conclusion

The lack of past development around the central business district's east end now presents itself as an incredible opportunity for the City of Houston to shape the policies and direction of an envisioned convention district.

The George R. Brown Convention Center 2025 Master Plan recognizes the need for the City of Houston to adopt a more aggressive, development-friendly strategy in the form of policy changes, private investment incentives and infrastructure improvements. Now is the time to leverage the momentum of recent projects like Discovery Green, One Park Place, HESS Tower and METRO's east-west light rail transit. Now is the time to promote the type of development that will enhance the character on the east side of downtown and support the long-term vision of the GRBCC. ■

CONTEXT: SITE

The George R. Brown Convention Center (GRBCC) opened in September 1987 on the east side of Downtown Houston. The center is owned and operated by the City of Houston and managed by Houston First Corporation.

Expansion of the Convention Center was completed in 2003, increasing its size from 1,150,000 square feet to 1,800,000 square feet. Exhibition space was increased for a total of 862,000 square feet and the addition of new meeting rooms increased the total to 101.

For over 20 years, the GRBCC has been an iconic fixture in Houston. In its first fifteen years, the Convention Center was surrounded by surface parking lots, undeveloped parcels and abandoned buildings. It has only been in the past decade that any substantive development has occurred in the surrounding area.

Regional

Access to Houston's Central Business District and the GRBCC is relatively convenient due to a well-developed system of state and federal highways. The Convention Center is located adjacent to US Highway 59 which intersects with Interstate 10 just

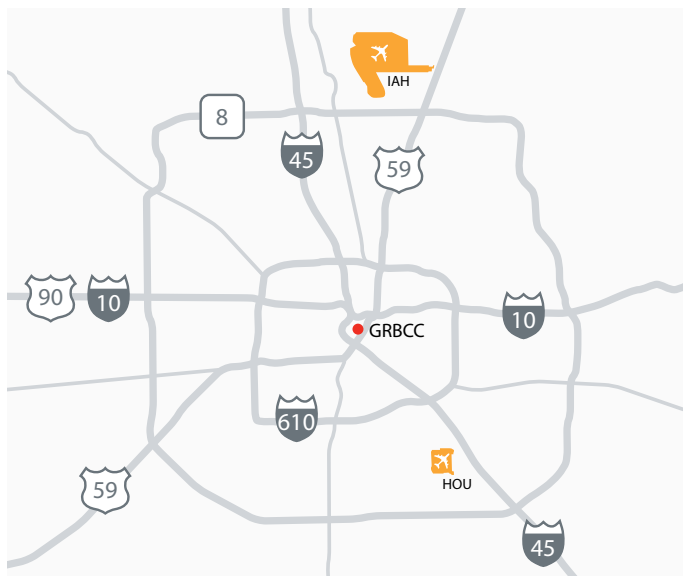
north of the center and intersects with Interstate 45 just south of the center.

The GRBCC is 22 miles from Bush Intercontinental Airport on Houston's north side and 10 miles from Hobby Airport on the south side of town.

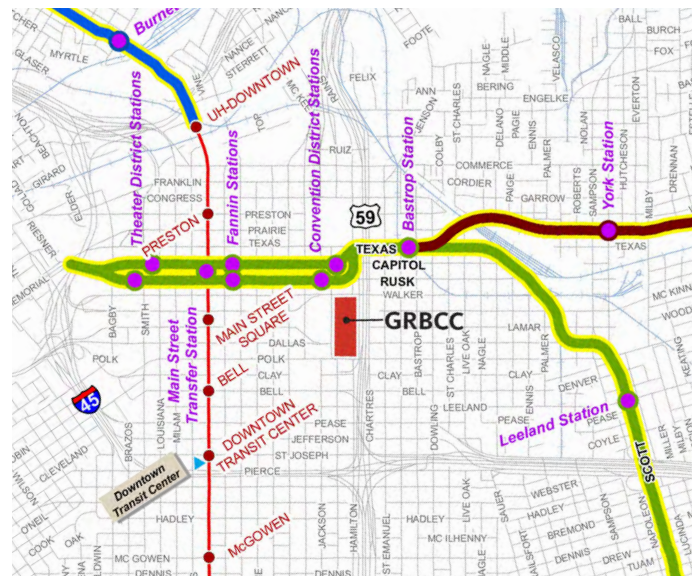
Local

Anchoring the eastern edge of the Houston Downtown Management District, the GRBCC is just north of the intersection that joins the Downtown Management District, the East Downtown Management District and the Midtown Management District.

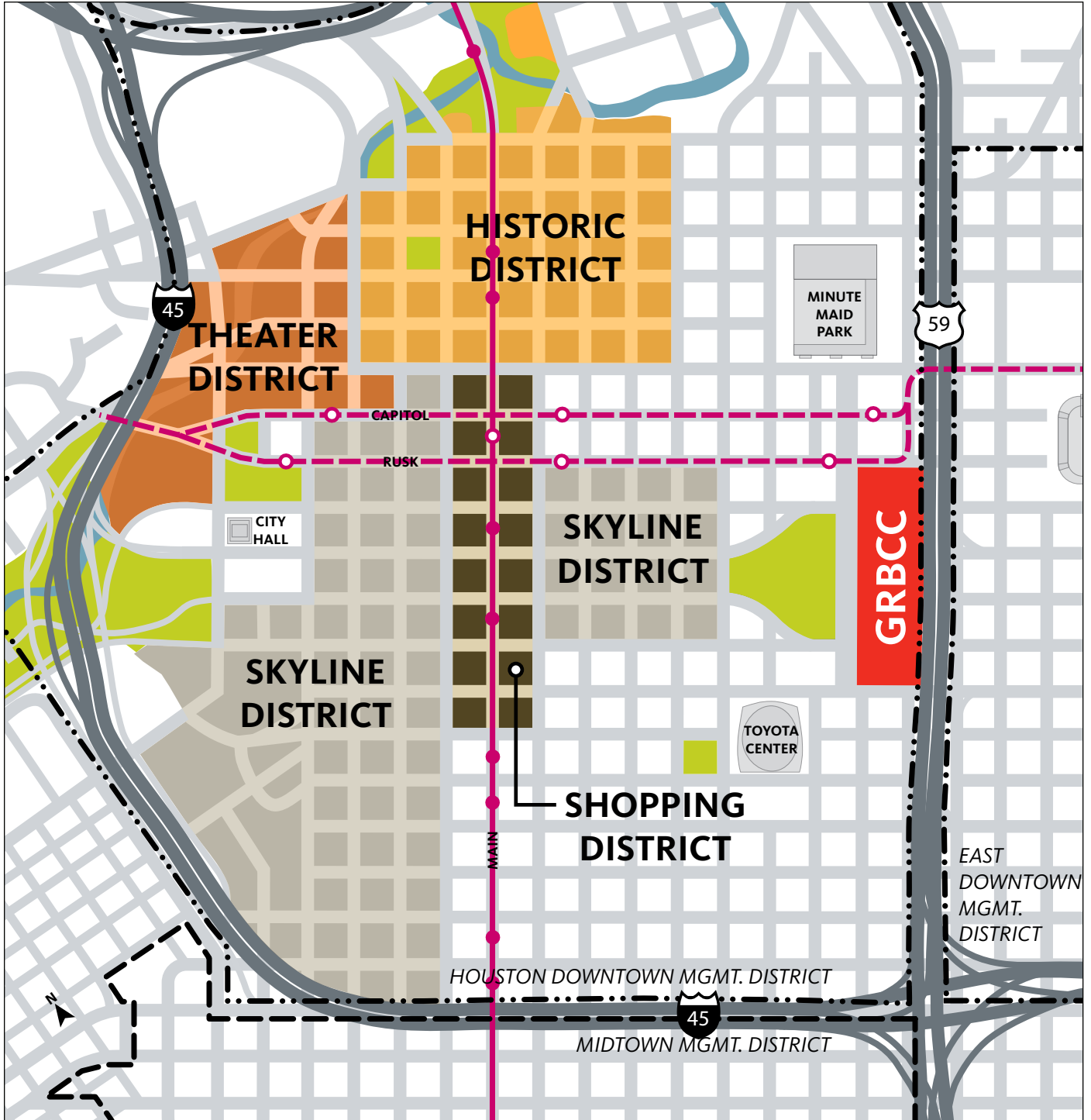
The GRBCC is adjacent to Discovery Green (a twelve-acre urban park) and the Hilton Americas Hotel. The Convention Center is flanked by two major sports venues, Minute Maid Park (Houston Astros) to the north and Toyota Center (Houston Rockets) to the south. Groundbreaking for the new soccer stadium (Houston Dynamo) took place in 2011 and will be located east of US 59 five blocks northeast of the Convention Center. The GRBCC is located eight blocks from the LRT Main Street Square Station, and will be only one block from the Convention District Stations on the new Southeast line now under construction.



Regional Highway Network

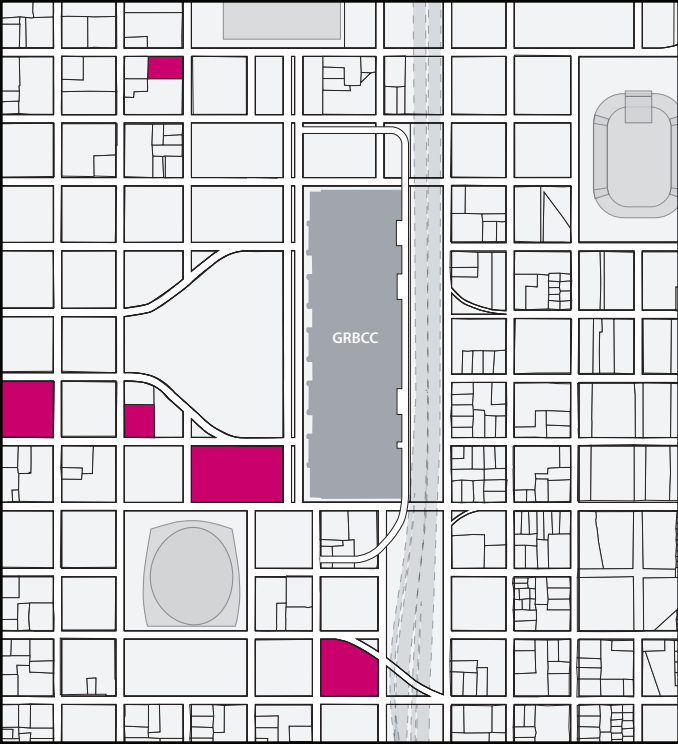


Houston METRO LRT Map

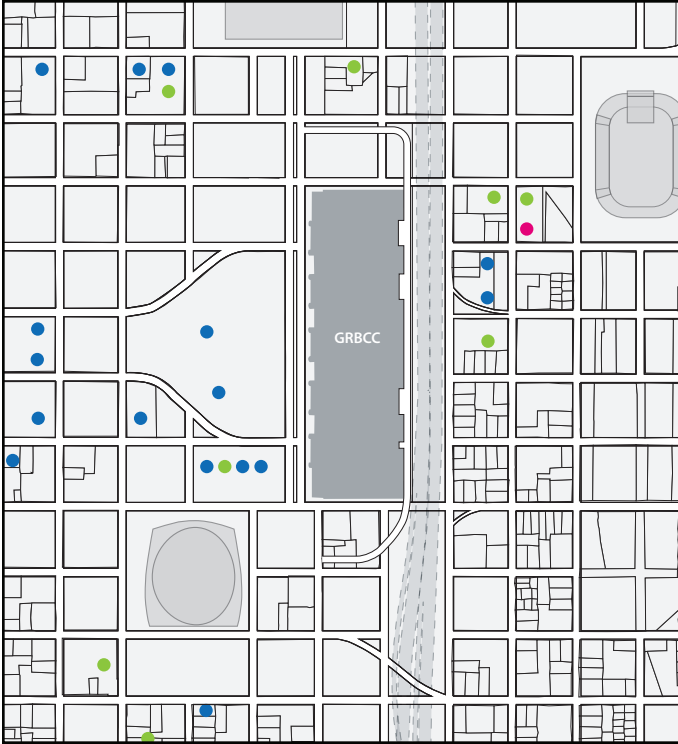


Local District Identities and Management Jurisdictions

CONTEXT: LAND USE



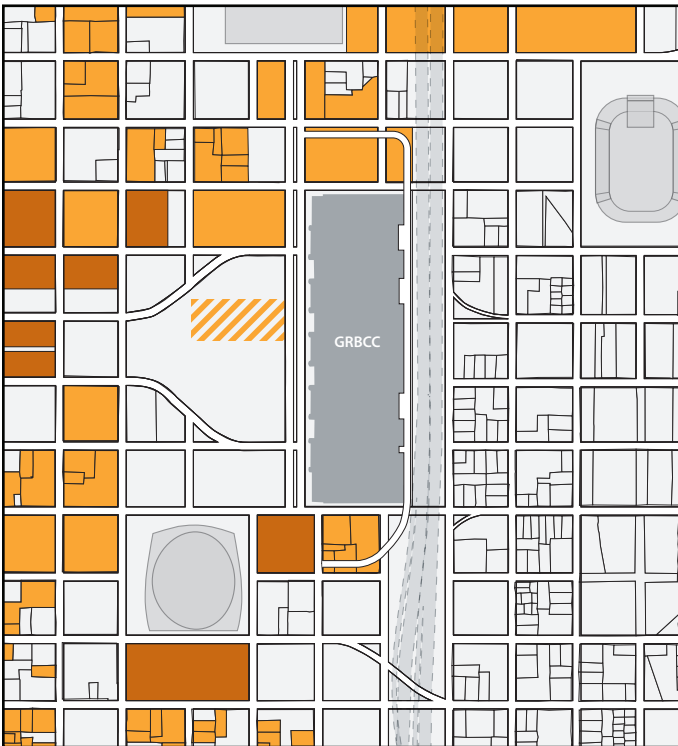
HOTELS



NIGHTLIFE ● Restaurant ● Bar/Club ● Music



ATTRACTIONS ■ Park ■ Sports Arena



PARKING ■ Garage ■ Surface ■ Underground

Hotels & Attractions

The primary criticisms expressed by industry experts (hospitality; meeting planners; tourism; exhibitors) focus on the lack of sufficient hotel rooms and attractions (restaurants; bars/clubs; shopping; entertainment) within convenient walking distance to the Convention Center. There are over 2,900 rooms within a ten-minute walk of the GRBCC. Most options for nearby restaurants and bars are inside hotels like the Hilton Americas with little or no street presence.

There is no entertainment district in the immediate vicinity. The Houston Pavilions, five to seven blocks to the southwest of the GRBCC, provides the most concentrated group of shops, restaurants and entertainment venues. The Historic District, 10-13 blocks to the northwest, offers a variety of restaurants with the largest concentration occurring around Market Square. The Theater District, located just under a mile from the GRBCC on the west side of downtown, is home to nine world-class performing arts organizations and hosts a diverse range of touring shows.

East of the GRBCC, directly across US 59 is the East Downtown Management District, EaDo. While there are currently a handful of restaurants, bars and music venues that draw nighttime crowds to EaDo, this area currently lacks a cohesive identity, and therefore does not draw many out-of-town visitors. Plans for hotels and

retail development in this area have been discussed in recent years, but at this time the only major attraction with the power to draw visitors and conventioners to this area is Dynamo Stadium (currently under construction). Although the GRBCC borders EaDo, the perceptual distance to this neighborhood is far greater because conventioners enter and exit the Convention Center along the downtown-oriented front side of the building along Avenida de las Americas (ADLA).

Discovery Green represents the city's finest example of public open space and serves as the 'front door' to the GRBCC.

Residential

A significant increase in residents in close proximity would indirectly support the long range vision for the GRBCC. More residents equate to more amenities that, in turn, would be available to convention visitors. An increase in people living downtown would result in more pedestrians on downtown streets, 24-7, fostering a sense of urban vitality and safety for residents and visitors alike.

One Park Place, Herrin Lofts and the Lofts at the Ballpark represent the most recent residential developments in east downtown.

Public Parking

Parking near the GRBCC is designed for peak events. On most days, there is a surplus of parking, both surface and structured. The Hilton Americas Garage,

Tundra Garage and underground parking at Discovery Green are heavily used during major events at the GRBCC, Toyota Center and the Hilton Americas. The surface lots north of the GRBCC serve both the Convention Center and sporting events at Minute Maid Park. When the Houston Dynamo Stadium is completed, it is anticipated that these surface lots will supplement the parking lots east of US 59 to help accommodate parking needs.

MAIN POINTS

- Houston lacks a sufficient number of hotels within walking distance to the GRBCC.
- No entertainment district exists in the immediate vicinity of the GRBCC.
- An increase in residential development near the GRBCC would bring additional amenities and more vibrant street life.

CONTEXT: CIRCULATION



Avenida de las Americas



Polk Street at the GRBCC

Vehicular

The construction of the GRBCC in 1987 and its expansion in 2003 had a major impact on east-west streets connecting the central business district to neighborhoods east of US 59. The Convention Center's footprint effectively shut down the continuous east-west traffic of Dallas, Lamar, McKinney and Walker Streets. Add to that the extra wide profile of Avenida de las Americas and the irregular configuration of the blocks that now comprise Discovery Green and one can understand the resultant disruption to the original street grid system immediately surrounding the Convention Center.

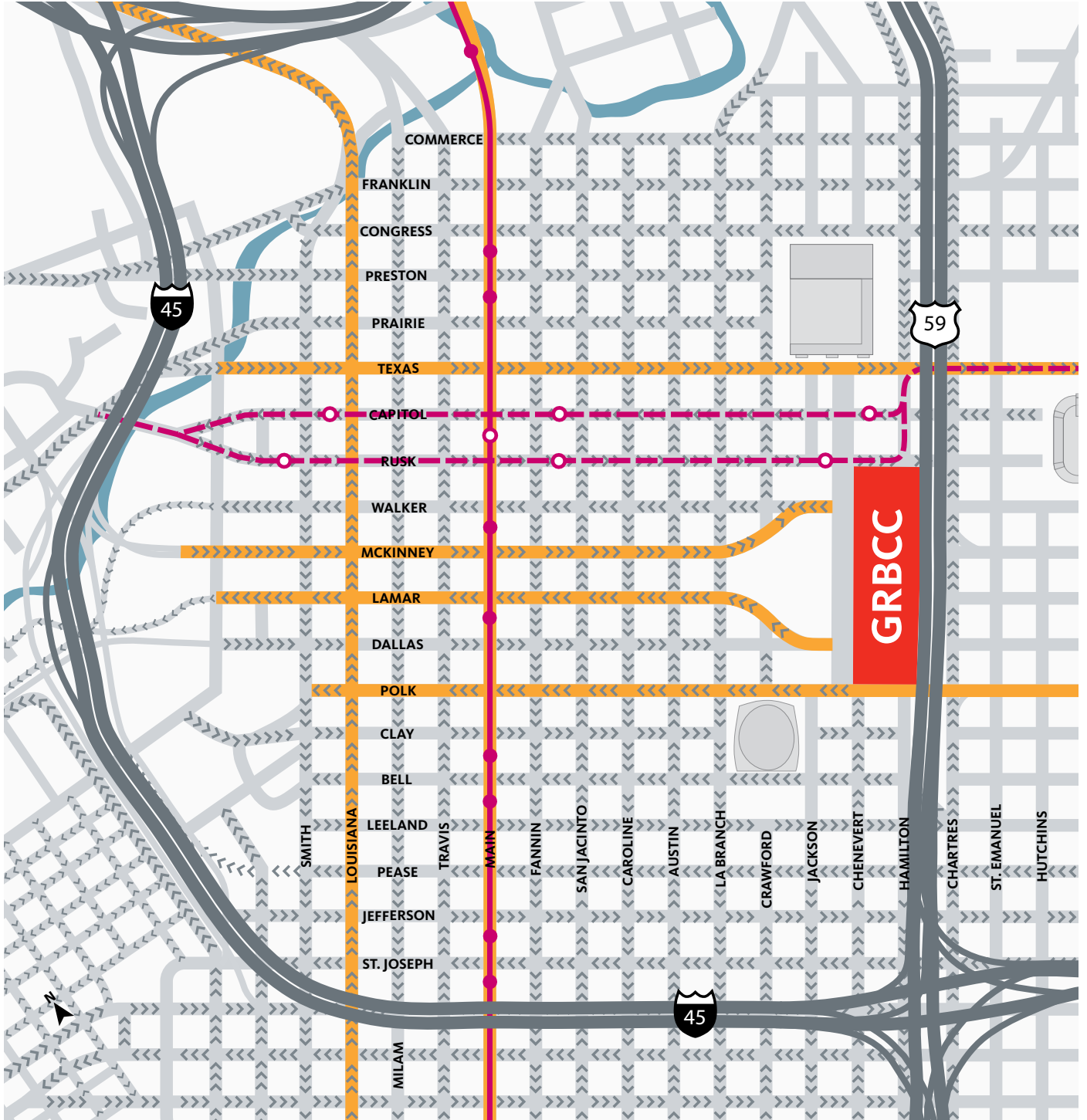
The addition of Minute Maid Park and Toyota Center, north and south of the GRBCC respectively, have placed increased importance on Texas and Polk Avenues as east-west connectors.







Less impactful to traffic flow was the closure of north-south streets, Chenevert and Hamilton. It does, unintentionally, cause Chartres Street to serve as a service lane for large tractor-trailer trucks backing into the Convention Center's loading docks.

METRO Light Rail

The existing north-south light rail transit (LRT) line on Main Street is eight blocks west of the Convention Center and, as a result, plays a secondary role as a transportation link to the GRBCC. The new east-west lines on Rusk and Capitol Streets have great potential for serving the GRBCC, providing links to hotels and restaurants in the central business district and entertainment venues in the Theater District.

The GRBCC and METRO are coordinating their plans with regard to the LRT's alignment at Rusk Street and Hamilton Avenue in order to (1) ensure no disruption of LRT service when the north parcel is being developed and (2) minimize the premium for construction costs associated with development around and over an active rail line.



	ONE-WAY STREET		LIGHT RAIL - EXISTING		LIGHT RAIL STOP - EXISTING
	MAJOR THOROUGHFARE		LIGHT RAIL - PLANNED		LIGHT RAIL STOP - PLANNED

CONTEXT: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A number of competing destinations were researched and assessed based on the top five destination selection criteria: Convention Facilities, Hotel Package, Transportation, Attractions & Activities, and Safety & Security. Although many of these destinations have multiple convention venues, only data from the primary convention center and its surrounding area was included.

The comparative destinations in the adjacent list primarily include cities in the southeast and south central region of the United States and the major convention destinations in Texas.

Each destination profile provides information on the size and status of the convention facility, the number of hotel rooms and location for the primary convention center hotels, an airport profile, interstate highway access and rail connections, and a listing of attractions and activities.

Comparative Destinations

Georgia World Congress Center
Atlanta, Georgia

Dallas Convention Center
Dallas, Texas

Colorado Convention Center
Denver, Colorado

Indiana Convention Center
Indianapolis, Indiana

Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Convention Center
New Orleans, Louisiana

Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Florida

Phoenix Convention Center
Phoenix, Arizona

Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center
San Antonio, Texas

George R. Brown Convention Center
Houston, Texas



Georgia World Congress Center

Atlanta, Georgia



The Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) opened in 1976 and included in its first phase 320,000 square feet (SF) of exhibition space; additional meeting space included a lecture hall for 1,200 people. The translation capabilities within the lecture hall gave the facility its “world congress center” designation, a credential required at the time to host international conferences. Only a handful of congress centers existed in North America. The facility has been expanded three times, is located adjacent to the Georgia Dome and Philips Arena, and was used as a venue during the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. The 1,070-room Omni Hotel is located adjacent to the GWCC in the CNN Center. Several other 1,000+ room hotels commonly used during conventions (Westin, Hyatt, Hilton and Marriott Marquis) are located roughly three-quarters of a mile from the GWCC.

Convention Facilities 1,366,000 SF Exhibition
33,000 SF Ballroom
259,979 SF Meeting
Theater

Hotels 2,402 rooms within ten-minute walking distance
1,070 rooms adjacent (Omni)
1,332 rooms proximate (within 1/2 mile)

Transportation ATL is major hub and ranks #1 worldwide in enplanements
Headquarters of Delta Airlines
I-20, I-75, I-85 pass through Atlanta
GWCC is served by MARTA (local heavy rail)

Attractions & Activities State Capitol, Centennial Olympic Park, Underground Atlanta, The Fox Theater, Georgia Aquarium, High Museum of Art, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, CNN Studio Tour, Six Flags over Georgia, World of Coca-Cola, Zoo Atlanta
MLB Braves, NBA Hawks, NFL Falcons, NHL Thrashers
NASCAR - Atlanta Motor Speedway
PGA - The Masters, The Players Championship
Georgia Tech, Georgia State University

CONTEXT: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Dallas Convention Center

Dallas, Texas



In the late 1950s, the first phase of the Dallas Convention Center was opened and included exhibition space (Hall A) placed adjacent to an arena. This facility configuration was also used in Anaheim, Detroit and at the Astrodome Complex. Four expansions and numerous improvement projects have taken place over the years. In 1999, a major master plan was developed that provided for some additional exhibition space and a vast increase in the amount of meeting and ballroom space. This plan, updated and validated in 2010, presents a series of “plug ‘n’ play” improvements priced between \$10 million and \$60 million that could be procured from regular capital improvement funds. One of those projects, the outfitting of a junior ballroom space, is currently under construction and is scheduled to open concurrently with the Omni: DCC's new, attached headquarter hotel.

Convention Facilities 776,646 SF Exhibition
26,992 SF Ballroom
82,049 SF Meeting
Arena

Hotels 3,479 rooms within ten-minute walking distance
1,000 rooms attached (Omni) under construction
2,479 rooms proximate (within 1/2 mile)

Transportation DFW is major hub and ranks #4 in enplanements
Headquarters of American Airlines
DAL is a hub and headquarters for Southwest Airlines
I-20, I-35, I-45 pass through Dallas
DCC is served by local commuter rail

Attractions & Activities Six Flags Arlington, Dallas World Aquarium, Dallas Arboretum, Sixth Floor Museum, Dallas Heritage Village, Dallas Zoo, Public ArtWalk Dallas!
MLB Rangers, NBA Mavericks, NFL Cowboys, NHL Stars, MLS FC Dallas
NASCAR - Texas Motor Speedway
PGA – Byron Nelson Classic, The Colonial
Southern Methodist University, Texas Christian University, UT Arlington

Colorado Convention Center

Denver, Colorado



The first phase of the state-owned Colorado Convention Center opened in 1990, essentially replacing Denver's outdated Currigan Exhibition Hall. The initial phase offered 300,000 SF of exhibition space, 65,000 SF of meeting space and a 35,000 SF ballroom. The latest expansion essentially doubled the size of the facility, bringing the totals to those shown in the table below. A 1,000-car parking structure and the Wells Fargo Theater were also included in the expansion project.

Convention Facilities 580,000 SF Exhibition
(2) Ballrooms - 47,700 SF and 34,800 SF
96,700 SF Meeting

Hotels 6,852 rooms within ten-minute walking distance
1,724 rooms adjacent (Hyatt Regency, Embassy Suites, Hilton Garden Inn)
5,128 rooms proximate (within 1/2 mile)

Transportation DEN is a hub for United Airlines and ranks #5 in enplanements
I-26 and I-70 pass through Denver

Attractions & Activities Colorado State Capitol, Denver Art Museum, U.S. Mint, 16th Street Mall - Pedestrian Mall, Larimer Square, LoDo Historic District, Confluence Park, Cherry Creek Shopping District, Denver Botanic Gardens, Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Coors Brewery Tour, Buffalo Bill Museum & Grave
MLB Rockies, NBA Nuggets, NFL Broncos, NHL Avalanche, MLS Rapids
University of Denver, University of Colorado

CONTEXT: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Indiana Convention Center

Indianapolis, Indiana



The Indiana Convention Center was opened in 1972 with 120,000 SF of column-free exhibition space and completed its fourth expansion in January 2011 with the addition of exhibition, meeting and ballroom space on the site of the demolished RCA Dome. The recently opened expansion follows the completion of the Lucas Oil Stadium, home to the Indianapolis Colts, which is connected to the ICC via a climate-controlled walkway. The floor of the stadium is designed to accommodate exhibition use as well as provide large plenary space for the complex. An additional hotel is under development at the southeast corner of the facility across from the most-recent expansion.

Convention Facilities 588,000 SF Exhibition
33,335 SF Ballroom
113,302 SF Meeting
Stadium

Hotels 6,481 rooms within ten-minute walking distance
1,694 rooms attached (Marriott, Westin and Hyatt)
1,278 rooms adjacent (JW Marriott, Crowne Plaza)
3,509 rooms proximate (within 1/2 mile)

Transportation IND is an origination/departure airport and ranks #49 in enplanements
I-65, I-69, I-70, I-74 pass through Indianapolis

Attractions & Activities State Capitol, Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site, State Fairground, State Museum, State Library, IMS Hall of Fame Museum, Indianapolis Art Museum
NBA Pacers, NFL Colts
NASCAR, IRL - Indianapolis Motor Speedway
Butler University, Indiana University/Purdue University at Indianapolis

Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Convention Center

New Orleans, Louisiana



The Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Convention Center opened as part of the World's Fair New Orleans in 1984. The facility was completed after the Fair and offered initially 350,000 SF of exhibition space. The facility has been expanded three times since then; a major multi-function ballroom is being added to the facility at this time. For years, the only significant hotel property near the center was the Hilton Riverfront which could be accessed from the NOCC by passing through a shopping mall. Since then, a number of smaller hotels have been developed adjacent to the facility. Safety and security are still a major issue within the convention district.

Convention Facilities 1,069,237 SF Exhibition
36,448 SF Ballroom
197,788 SF Meeting
Theater

Hotels 6,571 rooms within ten-minute walking distance
1,622 rooms attached (Hilton Riverfront)
690 adjacent (Marriott, Embassy Suites)
4,259 rooms proximate (within 1/2 mile)

Transportation MSY is an origination/departure airport and ranks #46 in enplanements
I-10, I-12, I-55 pass near New Orleans

Attractions & Activities French Quarter, Mardi Gras, Jazz Festivals, Casinos, Riverboats
NBA Hornets, NFL Saints
PGA – Zurich Classic of New Orleans
Tulane University

CONTEXT: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Orange County Convention Center

Orlando, Florida



The Orange County Convention/Civic Center first opened in 1983 with a modest 150,000 SF of column-free exhibition space that could double as a 13,500-seat arena. The original master plan called for two additional phases consisting of a performing arts center and an arena. In 1990, the new master plan changed all plans for future expansions. The original 125-acre site on International Drive was located in a private 700-acre development, 12 miles from downtown Orlando, but only a mile away from Sea World. Three parcels adjacent to the OCCC were reserved for 800-room headquarter hotels. OCCC's Phase IV was completed in 1997; Phase V (OCCC North) was completed in 2003 and added another 1 million SF of exhibition space to the campus.

Convention Facilities 1,104,858 SF Exhibition
62,182 SF Ballroom
245,981 SF Meeting
Theater

Hotels 5,454 rooms within ten-minute walking distance
4,690 rooms adjacent (Peabody, Hilton, Rosen Centre, Westin Imagine)
764 rooms proximate (within 1/2 mile)
Orlando has the second largest supply of hotel rooms (120,000+) in the US behind Las Vegas

Transportation MCO is an origination/departure airport and ranks #13 in enplanements due to Orlando's position as the top tourist destination in the world
I-4, Florida Turnpike pass through Orlando

Attractions & Activities Walt Disney World, Universal Studios Florida, Sea World Florida, Kennedy Space Center, Port Canaveral
NBA Magic
NASCAR – Daytona International Speedway
PGA – Bay Hill Invitational, Disney Classic
University of Central Florida

Phoenix Convention Center

Phoenix, Arizona



The Phoenix Civic Plaza opened in the early 1970s and included 125,000 SF of exhibition space, 28,000 SF of meeting space and the 2,800-seat Symphony Hall. The facility was expanded with the addition of the South Building in the 1980, bringing the total amount of exhibition and meeting space to 240,000 SF and 58,000 SF, respectively. In 2002, an expansion plan was developed to enable the facility to triple its development density on its existing site while remaining operational through a series of carefully orchestrated construction phases. The West Building, built on the site of an outdoor plaza, opened in 2006 and allowed the demolition and reconstruction of the original North Building. Completion of the North Building in 2008 allowed the renovation of the South Building to be undertaken. The South Building will ultimately be replaced to bring the complex up to 1,000,000 SF of exhibition space.

Convention Facilities 584,500 SF Exhibition
(3) Ballrooms - 45,600 SF, 45,200 SF, and 28,000 SF
167,200 SF Meeting

Hotels 2,896 rooms within ten-minute walking distance
693 rooms adjacent (Hyatt)
2,203 rooms proximate (within 1/2 mile)

Transportation PHX is a hub airport for US Air and Southwest Airlines, ranking #9 in enplanements
I-10 and I-17 pass through Phoenix
A new light rail system has a station at the PCC complex

Attractions & Activities State Capitol, Desert Botanical Gardens, Heard Museum, Phoenix Museum of Art, Arizona Science Center, Old Scottsdale, Camelback and South Mountain Parks, resorts, spas and golf courses
MLB Diamondbacks, NBA Suns, NFL Cardinals, NHL Coyotes
BCS Fiesta Bowl, Cactus League MLB Spring Training
NASCAR, IRL - Phoenix International Raceway
PGA – Phoenix Open
Arizona State University

CONTEXT: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center

San Antonio, Texas



The Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center opened in 1968 with 173,000 SF of exhibition space. The facility was expanded twice and achieved its present size in 2001. Last year, a comprehensive master plan was developed to determine the direction for future expansion and renovation of the adjacent HemisFair Park, which was part of the 1968 World's Fair in San Antonio. The Riverwalk and River Center Mall provide exceptional dining opportunities and tie the HBGCC to a good portion of the downtown hotel inventory.

Convention Facilities 431,424 SF Exhibition
39,576 SF Ballroom
92,627 SF Meeting
Theater

Hotels 8,067 rooms within ten-minute walking distance
1,003 rooms attached (Grand Hyatt)
1,478 rooms adjacent (Hilton, Marriott River Center)
5,586 proximate (within 1/2 mile)

Transportation SAT is an origination/departure airport and ranks #48 in enplanements
I-10, I-35, I-37 pass through San Antonio

Attractions & Activities Sea World Texas, Six Flags San Antonio, River Walk, The Alamo
NBA Spurs
PGA – Valero Texas Open
University of Texas San Antonio, Trinity University

George R. Brown Convention Center

Houston, Texas



The George R. Brown Convention Center opened in September 1987 on the east side of Downtown Houston. Expansion of the Convention Center was completed in 2003, increasing its size from 1,150,000 square feet to 1,800,000 square feet. Exhibition space was increased for a total of 862,000 square feet and the addition of new meeting rooms increased the total to 101. The GRBCC is located adjacent to the Hilton Americas, and is served by a number of other hotels within two to ten blocks. The recent completion of Discovery Green, located directly in front of the facility, has introduced new dining, recreation and entertainment opportunities in the immediate vicinity of the GRBCC.

Convention Facilities 862,000 SF Exhibition
31,590 SF Ballroom
101,943 SF Meeting
Theater

Hotels 2,955 rooms within ten-minute walking distance
1,200 rooms attached (Hilton Americas)
1,795 rooms proximate (within 1/2 mile)

Transportation IAH is a major hub and ranks #8 in enplanements
Largest Hub for United Airlines
Hub for Southwest Airlines
HOU is an origination/departure airport and ranks #43 in enplanements
I-10, I-45 pass through Houston

Attractions & Activities NASA Johnson Space Center, Galveston Island, Texas Medical Center, Houston Zoo, Houston Theater District, Houston Museum District, The Galleria, St. Arnold's Brewery, Hermann Park
MLB Astros, NBA Rockets, NFL Texans, MLS Dynamo
PGA – Shell Houston Open
University of Houston, Rice University

CONTEXT: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Quantitative Analysis

The two most important factors in assessing a convention destination are 1) the physical capacities and amenities within the Convention Center and 2) the makeup of the hotel inventory. For meeting planners, these two key areas must be met satisfactorily or an alternate destination is likely to be selected.

The charts herein display the relative size of exhibition, meeting and ballroom space for each respective facility; an average of the values for the eight competitive destinations (excluding the GRBCC) is also shown as a point of reference.

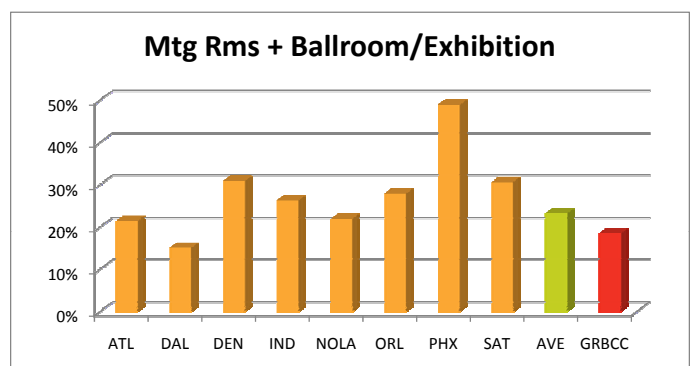
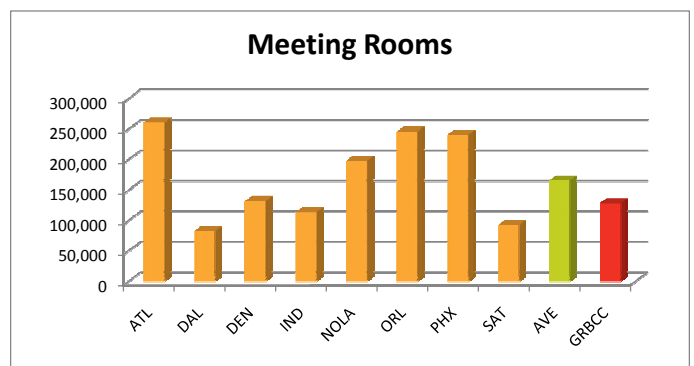
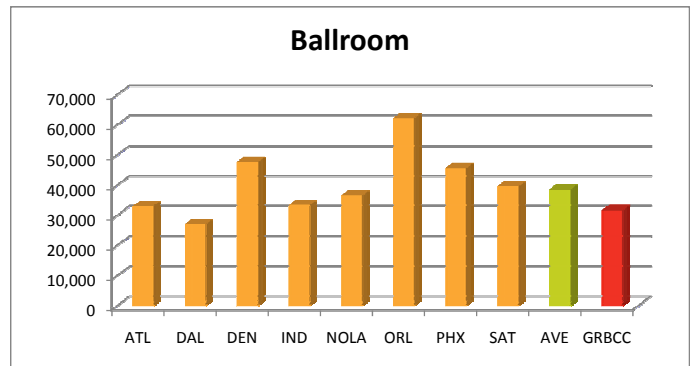
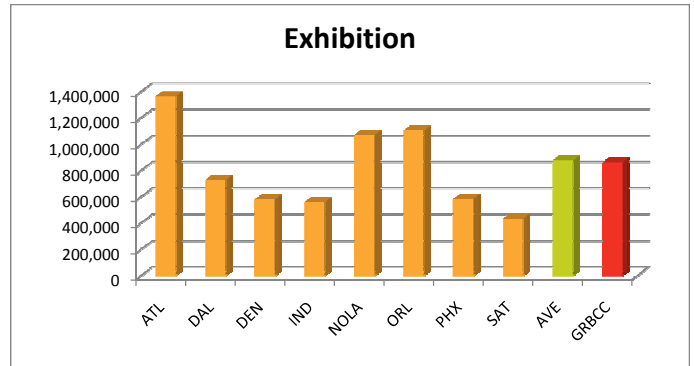
Exhibition Space

The amount of exhibition space provided at the GRBCC almost matches that of the average of the other eight facilities. This provides a basis for comparison of the other facility elements. At this point in the review, the balance of the rest of the program spaces will be assessed against the industry competitors. Any increase in the amount of exhibition space must be accompanied by a corresponding increase in meeting space.

Ballroom, Meeting Rooms, Breaks and Ratios

The amount of ballroom space provided at the GRBCC appears to be slightly less than that provided by the competitive set average; however, that metric is changing. The new master plan adopted in San Antonio will add a 50,000+ SF multi-function ballroom in its next expansion; New Orleans has a 50,000+ SF ballroom under design; and Dallas' amended master plan includes two ballrooms (60,000 SF and 40,000 SF) in future phases.

Although the number of break out rooms provided within the inventory of meeting space matches the competitive average, the overall quantity of meeting space at the GRBCC is below the competitive set average. This combination indicates that the size of the breakout rooms are small in comparison to those of competing venues. The GRBCC uses the



Ratios of meeting space, ballroom space and hotel rooms to exhibition space demonstrate areas where the GRBCC falls short against competing convention facilities.

halls on Level 3 to supplement the supply of meeting space for large assemblies and other gatherings, can also take advantage of additional meeting and ballroom space in the adjacent Hilton Americas.

When the total amount of meeting and ballroom space is placed in context against the amount of exhibition space provided, the GRBCC falls short against its competitors. Dallas is engaged in a program to double the amount of meeting space in their next capital improvement cycle which will further exacerbate the shortfall at the GRBCC. Re-programming of existing spaces may be able to correct some of these deficiencies in the near term. Any expansion outside of the existing footprint provides the opportunity to complete a rebalancing of the programmatic elements.

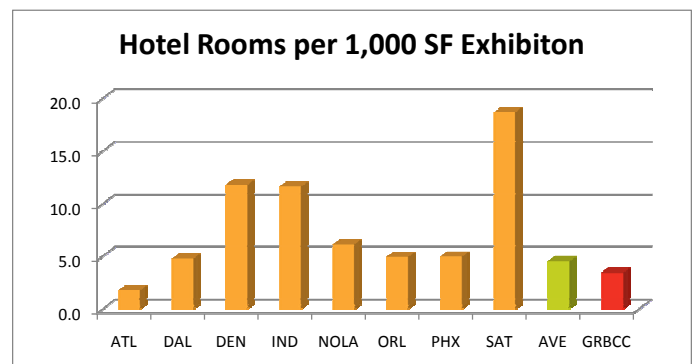
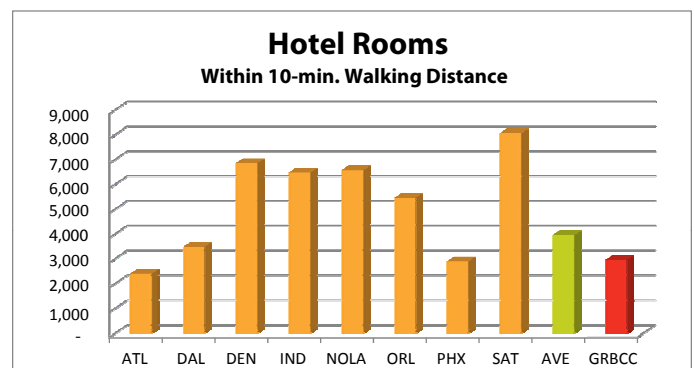
Proximate Hotel Inventory

The number of hotel rooms within a ten-minute (1/2 mile) walking distance of each respective convention venue is shown on the top chart to the right. The amount of available inventory in Houston is well below the average of the competitive set.

The GRBCC's lack of nearby downtown hotel room inventory is clearly shown in the top chart. Atlanta, New Orleans and Dallas also suffer from having the bulk of their convention-quality inventory located outside of walking distance from to their respective facilities. Shuttle bussing is often used to shorten travel times.

Both Orlando and San Antonio have a significant amount of inventory available adjacent to their facilities; all of Indianapolis' major hotels are attached to the facility by elevated walkways that are mostly climate controlled.

The number of hotel rooms provided per 1,000 SF of exhibition space further demonstrates graphically the shortage of inventory for the GRBCC against the competitive set. Compounding the significance of this disparity is the exemplary number of rooms available at the closest competitive destination geographically, San Antonio. ■



PLANNING PROCESS

Developing a long range master plan for a major civic asset like the GRBCC demands a highly collaborative process, requiring a significant time commitment and input from a variety of constituent groups. Allowing each stakeholder to discuss and define their needs, anticipate market demand and growth, and reach a consensus is the only way to ensure the master plan achieves a balance of interests for all parties.

Establishing Key Objectives

The GRBCC began its planning process with Gensler in mid-September 2010 with a goal-setting session that included key representatives of the GRBCC and Central Houston Civic Improvement. At that time, the assembled group identified key objectives for the planning report and a strategy for engaging industry leaders to supplement the expertise of the Gensler consultant team.

Hotel Advisory Panel

On November 29, 2010, the GRBCC hosted a panel discussion focused on the topic of convention center hotels and, more specifically, considerations for Houston First Corporation and the GRBCC regarding the need and potential strategies for future hotels adjacent to and serving the Convention Center. The panelists' comments and insights can be found elsewhere in this report as it relates to the GRBCC strategy and timeline for development.

Hotel Advisory Panelists

Mary L. Carolan *Senior Managing Director*
Allied Advisors

Michael Bartolotta *Vice Chair*
First Southwest Company

Clayton Elliott
Private Investor

Frank Calaguire *Principal*
SCS Advisors, Inc.

Stephen C. Jacobs *Partner*
Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell

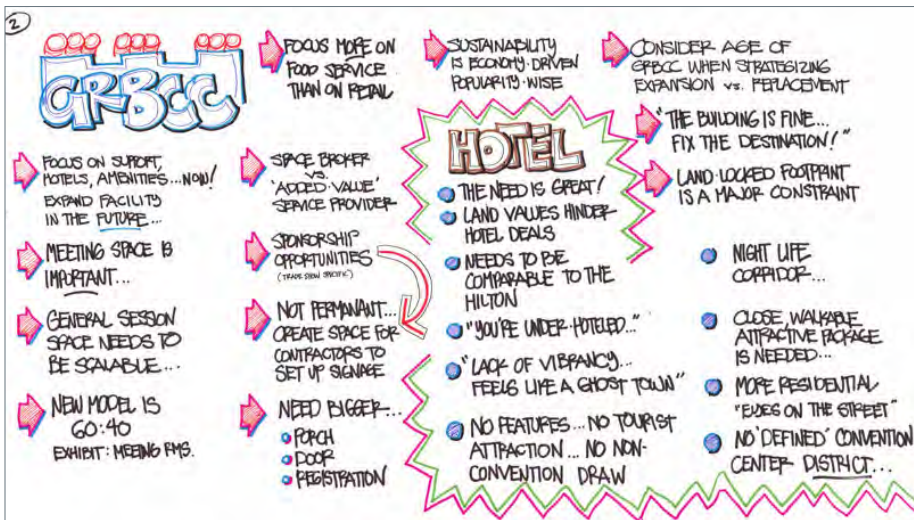
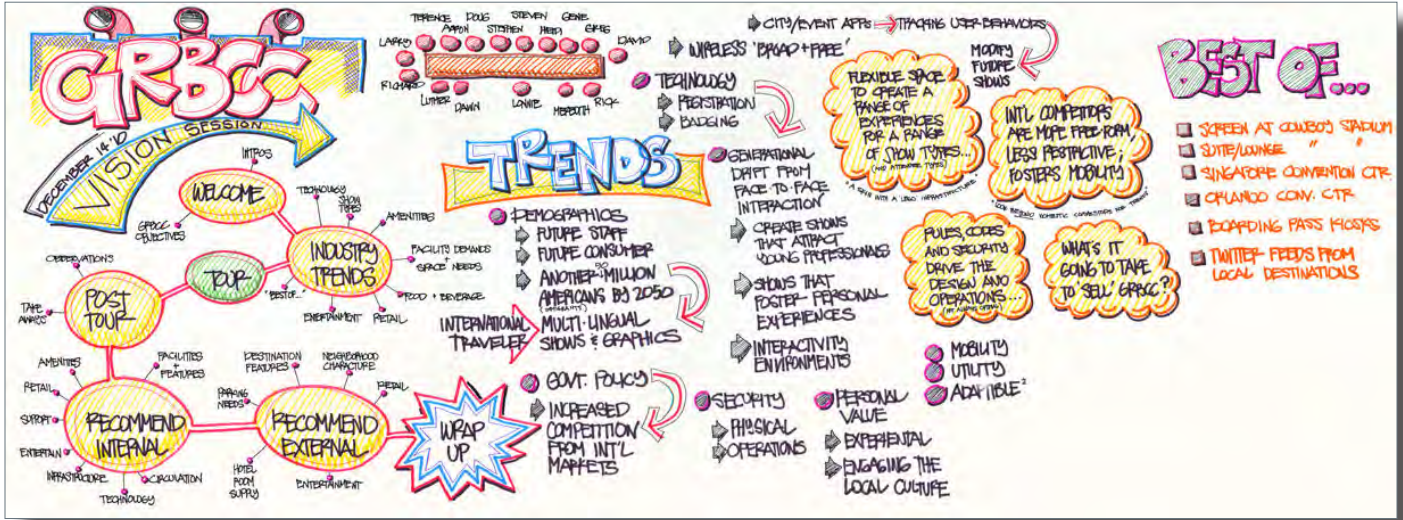
Industry Advisory Group - Vision Session

Two weeks later, on December 14, 2010 the GRBCC hosted an all-day vision session facilitated by Gensler with industry leaders including event specialists, meeting planners and exhibitors from across the nation.

During the session, the Advisory Group shared their knowledge of industry trends related to Show Demands, Facilities and Space Needs; Show Types; Attendee Demographics; Entertainment and Technology. Following tours of the GRBCC facilities and surrounding neighborhood, the group shared their observations and made recommendations for future expansion and/or upgrades to the GRBCC; and for continued development and improvements



Industry Advisor Group Vision Session, December 2010



Vision Session - Brainstorm

KEY CONCLUSIONS from the Vision Session

- The Number One priority need is for additional hotel rooms adjacent to the GRBCC
- The lack of nearby amenities, night life and convenient, walkable attractions hurts the GRBCC's competitiveness
- There is a need for more meeting space, either at the GRBCC or at adjacent facilities

to the surrounding neighborhood related to amenities and attractions, hotel room supply, retail, entertainment, image and character.

Given the Advisory Group's first hand experience with convention center facilities nationwide, their observations were extremely important to meeting the GRBCC's objec-

tive of enhancing its competitiveness and increasing its market share of exhibitions, trade shows and other events.

Planning Charrette

On January 4-5, 2011 a two-day planning charrette was conducted on-site in a meeting room at the GRBCC. Participants included key representatives of

PLANNING PROCESS

Industry Advisory Group

- Larry Arnaudet *Executive Director*
Exhibition Services & Contractors Assn.
- Aaron Bludworth *Chief Operating Officer*
Fern Exposition & Event Services
- Terence Donnelly *Vice President*
Experient
- Doug Ducate *President & CEO*
Center for Exhibition Industry Research
- Stephen Emery *Sr. Manager Meetings & Expositions*
Society of Exploration Geophysicists
- Steven Hacker *President*
International Assn. of Exhibitions & Events
- Richard Lewis *Vice President*
Freeman Company
- Greg Ortale *President & CEO*
Greater Houston Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Gene Sanders *Vice President*
Society of the Plastics Industry
- Heidi Voorhees *Vice President*
Institute of Food Technologists



Planning Charrette, January 2011

the GRBCC, Central Houston Civic Improvement, Gensler and its consultant team.

The charrette began with participants identifying their objectives and desired outcomes for the two-day session followed by an analysis of the Convention Center and site elements (adjacent land use; road systems; open space; etc.) that influence the operations and competitiveness of the GRBCC. For the remainder of the day, the Gensler team developed a wide range of expansion options for the Convention Center as well as concepts for adjacent private sector development that would enhance the GRBCC and the vitality of downtown Houston's east side.

At the end of Day One, a mid-point progress review with the client team was conducted. Each expansion option was discussed in detail, the opportuni-

ties and constraints for each identified and documented. As feedback was received, some options were eliminated and others retained for further refinement and consideration.

On Day Two, the planning team continued to refine the expansion options, incorporating the client team's comments and direction from the previous day. Additionally, a timeline diagram of required actions and decisions was developed to support the multi-scenario strategy and provide a strategic rationale for future decisions regarding expansion.

That afternoon, the team also developed a draft mock-up of the final report for input from the client. The charrette concluded with a number of action items and direction from the client team for moving forward with the report.

Stakeholder Meetings

Following the charrette as the planning team continued to refine the expansion options, meetings were held with local stakeholders, public agencies and private developers to elicit their ideas and feedback to the options under consideration. Over the course of several weeks, meetings with representatives of Incarnate Word Academy, the proposed Regional Tourism Center, the Mayor's office and private sector developers with interests in East Downtown focused on the opportunities



Planning Charrette, January 2011

and impacts that future development in and around the GRBCC would have on their respective long term plans. The Stakeholder feedback provided fresh perspectives for the planning team as the options continued to evolve.

Concurrent with the GRBCC study, the HGAC Livable Centers planning effort was also in progress. The area parameters of the HGAC study encompasses the Convention Center and surrounding area. It is important, therefore, that the two planning efforts be coordinated with respect to land use strategies and vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems. The two planning teams met on several occasions to update each other on direction and progress and to foster alignment of key initiatives. ■



Livable Centers map highlighting three pedestrian corridors

KEY CONCLUSIONS from the Planning Charrette

- Consider the importance of having a rich mix of land uses within the convention district
- Consider the opportunities for development around the METRO LRT
- The Plan should foster proactive public and private sector development
- The Plan should focus on the interdependence of the Convention Center and surrounding neighborhood

KEY DRIVERS: OVERVIEW

Convention facilities serve a wide variety of users throughout their annual events calendar. A well balanced facility meets the program needs of conventions, trade and consumer shows, and a variety of local public events. In many cases, however, the stated mission for convention centers is to provide local economic impact and employment through expenditures by visitors from outside of the community.

Cities compete on a “destination-basis” rather than a “facility-basis”.

A large number of professional meetings and trade shows are not tied to a single city, and rotate the site of their convention around the country to provide “geographic fairness” to their membership. For this group of users, convention and exhibition sites are selected on the basis of the total package available within a community; cities compete on a “destination-basis” rather than a “facility-basis.”

Communities generally assess these elements and try to improve upon them in a continual process of “fixing the weakest link.” For convention destinations, the local government can provide solutions for facilities and transportation; it can become a partner in delivering accommodation and support policies that encourage the private sector to develop the balance of hospitality infrastructure.

A decade ago, the City of Houston recognized the need for, and played a major role in, the development of the highly successful Hilton Americas Hotel. Since then, cities competing with Houston for convention and trade show business have increased their convention center hotel offerings. Industry advisors and market analysis by consultants agree that Houston’s convention district lacks the number of hotel rooms and hotel mix required to be competitive in today’s market.

Destination Selection Criteria

A number of professional organizations include, as members, the persons responsible for selecting meeting and convention destinations. The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) represents primarily convention planners for associations, Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) medical meeting planners, International Association of Expositions and Events (IAEE) exhibition management and Meeting Planner International (MPI) smaller meetings that have minimal exhibition needs.

For almost three decades, ASAE has surveyed their membership to determine the most important factors in selecting a convention destination. Throughout the history of this effort, the top five criteria have remained unchanged for the most part. In priority order, these include:

- Convention Facilities
- Hotel Package
- Transportation
- Attractions & Activities
- Safety & Security

Convention center capacity and number of hotel rooms establish the first threshold for selection; if a destination is lacking in either of these, no further consideration can be given to the city by the planner.



GRBCC Entrance

KEY DRIVERS: CONVENTION FACILITIES

The reality is that large audiences arrive on the street level to a congested sidewalk leading to small interior vestibules.

Convention facilities are reviewed for the amount of prime exhibition space, meeting rooms, multi-function ballrooms, theaters and specialty spaces available. Exhibition space is checked for ceiling height, loading access, registration space, show office, and storage areas. The number and seating capacity of meeting rooms and subdivisions is checked against the prospectus. Multi-function ballrooms, theaters and lecture halls may provide additional space for meetings and food service needs.

The following examines the main components of the GRBCC's ability to support the needs of current shows and events with a comparison to facilities in competitor cities.

Entry Concourse

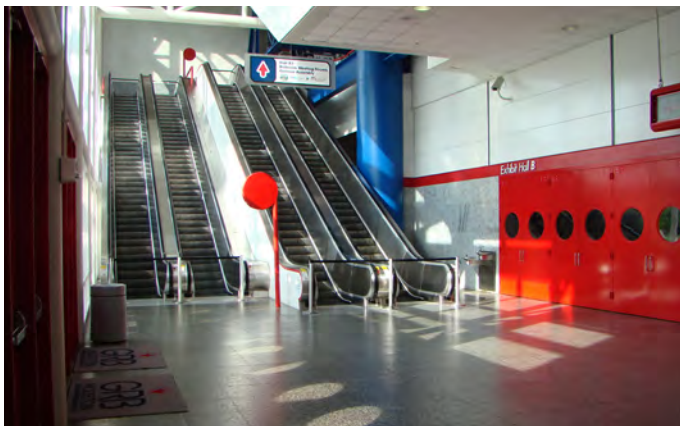
The arrival sequence at the GRBCC is constrained from multiple aspects. The original design concept was based on creating an arrival and registration zone at the pre-function space on Level 2 that would be directly linked to multiple convention hotels on adjacent blocks. The reality is that larger audiences arrive on the street level via the Avenida de las

Americas to a congested sidewalk leading to small interior vestibules, offering constrained ability for event ticketing, registration, queuing or crowd management.

Consideration should be given to recapturing a portion of the boulevard and creating a proper arrival zone with vehicle drop-off, ticketing or registration and a method for controlling secure access by attendees to the rest of the facility. Options might include extending the street level to create lateral concourses and portals into the existing halls and escalator lobbies. Another approach would be to convert the existing mezzanine on Level 2 to a public thoroughfare and to isolate and/or secure it from the rest of the building. Because of the complexity of the existing structure, substantial modifications involving the building façade would require careful planning and phased implementation to minimize any disruption to ongoing events and operations.

Exhibit Space

The GRBCC currently has 853,000 square feet of Exhibit Hall space. 629,000 square feet of contiguous exhibit space occurs on Level 1 which, if need-



GRBCC Entry Concourse



GRBCC Exhibition Space

KEY DRIVERS: CONVENTION FACILITIES

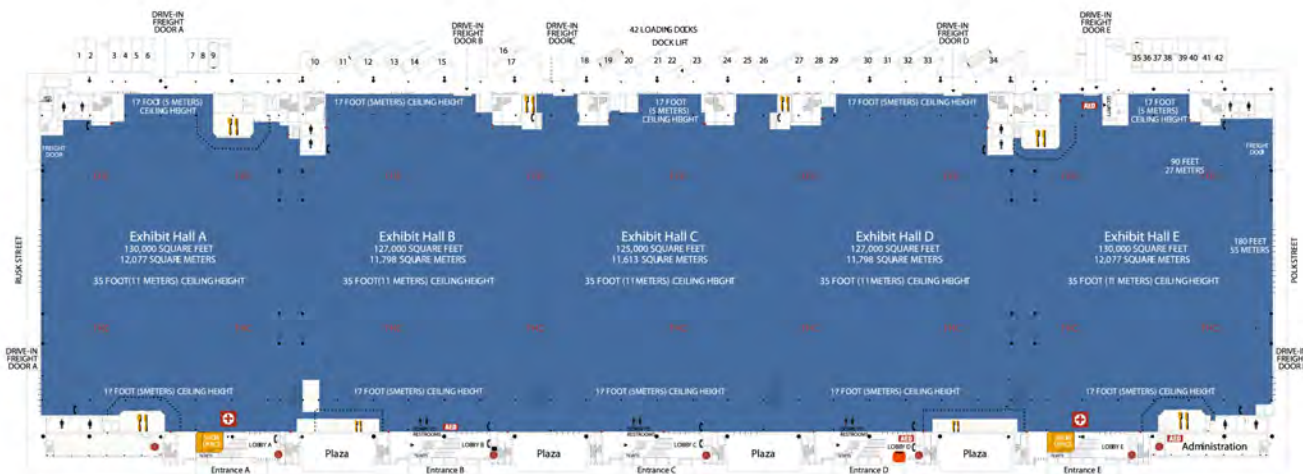
LEVEL 3 (+51')



LEVEL 2 (+25')



LEVEL 1 (+0')



ed, can be divided into five separate exhibit halls. The main exhibit space has 35' ceiling heights and is serviced by loading docks on the building's east façade as well as drive-in freight doors on both Rusk and Polk Streets.

Two exhibit halls are located on Level 3 and serviced by a drive-in freight doors via a ramp on the building's east side. Exhibit Hall A3 is 124,000 square feet and Exhibit Hall B3 is 99,000 square feet.

Contiguous expansion of the exhibition halls would be extremely challenging given the urban site and limitations imposed by the LRT along Rusk Street to the north and the critical need to maintain east-west connectivity via Polk Street to the south. From a market perspective, additional convention space must create a physically-linked but self-contained module that includes an appropriate amount of exhibition, meeting and banquet/multipurpose space to satisfy the most common aspects of conventions and association meetings.

The GRBCC exhibition space matches the average size of competitor cities. The convention centers in Atlanta, Orlando and New Orleans have considerably more exhibition space, while those in Dallas, San Antonio and Indianapolis have less. Based on analysis of the existing clientele and industry averages for large convention centers, a future expansion should include from 300,000 to 400,000 SF of exhibition space.

Meeting Space

The meeting room configuration at the GRBCC allows for a high degree of flexibility in terms of accommodating different group sizes and spatial

needs. The rooms are typically stand alone pods connected by public concourses and divisible into four to six rooms in a cross-shape using operable walls. This arrangement poses challenges with respect to service access because it does not allow for a designated service entry into each room. When fully subdivided, each meeting room has only one door used by both visitors and staff. All furniture and equipment are stored remotely from function space; food service and technical support are provided through high-finish and high-visibility public areas.

Newer convention and conference facilities commonly have a more linear layout with function space

Additional convention space must create a physically-linked but self-contained module that includes an appropriate amount of exhibition, meeting and multipurpose space.

sandwiched between a public concourse and service corridor. Large rooms divide into medium-sized breakouts; the smallest rooms combine into medium-sized rooms, all to maintain proportions, aesthetics and acoustical properties appropriate to the audience size.

The distribution of meeting space within the GRBCC is also of concern since the majority of it is grouped together at the south end of Level 3 and is therefore only proximate to a portion of the exhibit space below. Additional meeting rooms should be provided near the north end of the facility to improve marketability to multiple conventions being held concurrently in the facility. A more even redistribution of meeting rooms on Level 3 would decrease walking times by creating convenient access to meeting space from any location on Level 1. Compared to its counterparts in other cities, the GRBCC currently lacks a sufficient amount of

KEY DRIVERS: CONVENTION FACILITIES

meeting space. At approximately half the competitive average, Houston exceeds only Dallas and San Antonio in meeting room space and their updated master plans include expansion of meeting rooms that will put Houston at the bottom. Future expansion should include 60,000-70,000 square feet of divisible meeting rooms.

smaller ballrooms. Based on the comparative analysis of the Convention Center's main competitors, it is recommended that future expansion plans include the addition of a 60,000 square foot multipurpose ballroom. Compared to its counterparts in other cities, the GRBCC is well below the average for ballroom space and only Dallas offers less than Houston.

The multipurpose room combines the aesthetic quality of a ballroom with the utility services of an exhibition hall and the seating capacity of a small arena.

The Balanced Facility Analysis (see Appendix) indicates that the greatest single improvement to guest experience, marketability and operating revenues for the GRBCC would be the addition of a large multipurpose room with banquet capacity for 3,000 to 4,000 people

In keeping with the GRBCC's LEED Silver certification, reconstruction of the meeting areas should incorporate the latest trends in energy efficiency and sustainability in building materials and systems. Cost reductions should accrue from improved staff efficiency via reconfiguration and lower utility consumption from improved lighting, mechanical equipment and controls.

and electrical, lighting and technical support for keynote speeches, multimedia presentations and related large assemblies for up to 7,000 guests.

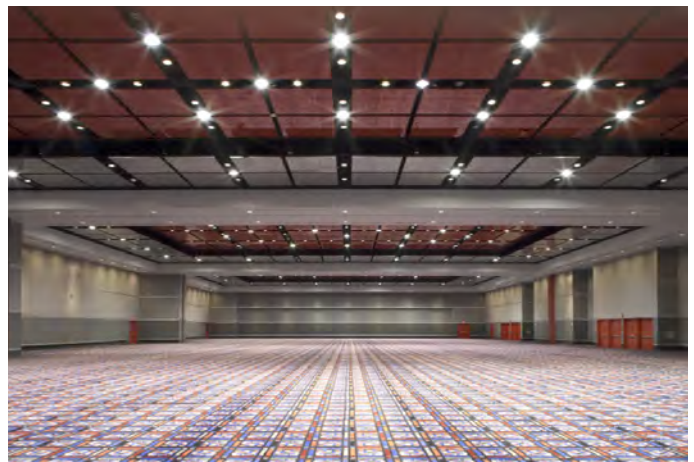
The multipurpose room combines the aesthetic quality of a ballroom with the utility services of an exhibition hall and the seating capacity of a small arena. Balancing these diverse needs requires an artful design that carefully integrates event support services into an appealing yet durable space.

Ballroom & Multipurpose Space

The GRBCC currently has a 31,500 square feet Ballroom on Level 3 that can be divided into three



GRBCC Meeting Space



GRBCC George Bush Grand Ballroom

Retail, Food & Beverage

Retail, food and beverage outlets are differentiated between those offered within the GRBCC and those that are external to the Convention Center and located within walking distance of the building. Internal functions are run by the GRBCC as an extension and in support of event activities; external functions are assumed to be privately-owned, or operated and serve a broader market.

The GRBCC offers a limited number of retail and food outlets on Level 2. Operating hours for these stands are variable to coincide with conventions, trade shows and special events. Functions include a business center offering copy, scan, package-handling and computer services; a Starbucks and unbranded food outlets offering coffee and other drinks, snacks, fruit, pre-packaged sandwiches and hot meals for take-out service. Café tables are placed proximate to the outlets, but table service is not provided.

Food concession stands are located within the exhibition halls to provide additional points-of-sale, improve customer service and act as pantries for staging buffets or banquets that are held in the halls.

Competing facilities offer similar food and beverage conveniences; however, recent trends in new construction have included permanent food courts and two-sid-

ed concession stands which can be opened into both concourses and exhibition halls. Recent designs that place food outlets opening to the street as well as internal concourses have been well received, but the measure of success is still being evaluated.

Facilities in downtown locations such as Phoenix and Nashville include commercial retail F&B outlets that are not related exclusively to the convention business. The intent is to better integrate convention centers into the urban fabric by minimizing large blank building faces and enhancing foot traffic on city streets. While these efforts can become opportunities to improve the overall financial performance of convention centers, political and regulatory hurdles have somewhat limited the ability of cities to successfully market some of the spaces as the outlets are perceived as unfairly competing with the private sector.

Servicing the customers must be the primary motivation in establishing retail and F&B outlets. Adjacency to the facility's major activity zones is a key to success. Show management does not want to lose attendees from the venue during the daytime; adequate, dynamic and flexible food service outlets must be made available to the population within the building. ■

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

Facilities

- Adequate convention facilities and hotel capacity are the most critical factors when event planners are selecting a venue.
- Consideration should be given to recapturing a portion of ADLA to create a proper arrival zone.
- The greatest single improvement to guest experience, marketability and operating revenues for the GRBCC would be the addition of a large multipurpose room with banquet capacity for 3,000 to 4,000 people
- Servicing the customers must be the primary motivation in establishing retail and F&B outlets.

KEY DRIVERS: **HOTELS PACKAGE**

Conventions and large trade shows draw thousands of attendees from out of town. Cities compete to host these events and, in turn, benefit from the large number of visitors and the dollars they spend in local restaurants, shops and entertainment venues. Hotels adjacent to, or near, the convention center are the primary beneficiaries of big shows. The availability and quality of hotels near the convention center and the amenities available to visitors are key considerations for those responsible for selecting the city to host their event.

Planners will check the size of available room blocks and proximity of the convention center hotel(s) to the convention center. Larger events prefer to secure in excess of 1,000 rooms in the headquarter property and wish to avoid the expense of shuttle bussing from remote hotels. An “attached” convention center hotel with a climate controlled connection is preferred over “adjacent” locations (across a street, not climate controlled) or “proximate” locations (a short walk). Planners prefer dealing with fewer hotels that are located nearby to meet their room inventory requirements.

Downtown Houston and the GRBCC lack several things that are considered positive draws for its competitor cities including attached and proximate hotel room supply. Since the opening of the GRBCC

“You’re under-hoteled...”

“The need for more hotel rooms is great...”

“Focus on hotels and amenities now!”

*Quotes from the
Industry Advisory Group Vision Session
December 2010*

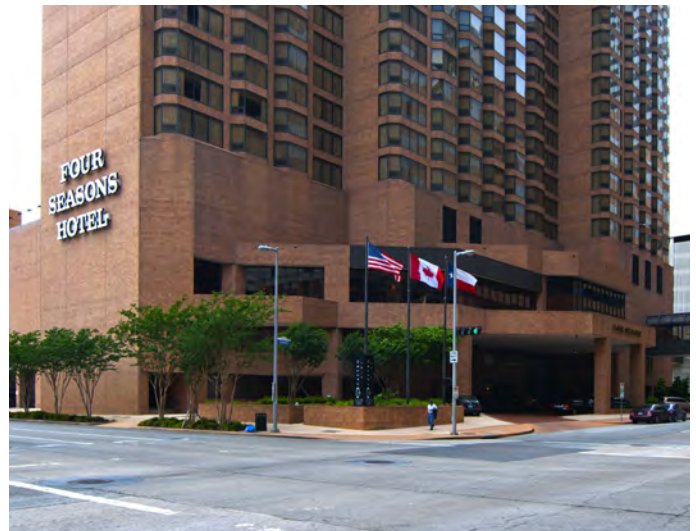
in 1987, the surrounding area has been slow to develop including the development of hotels to serve the Convention Center.

Current Accommodations

The Four Seasons Hotel is four blocks away from the GRBCC and for years was the nearest hotel to the Convention Center. Today, with the development of Discovery Green, the walk to the GRBCC is more pleasurable and feels safer to the pedestrian.



Hilton Americas



Four Seasons

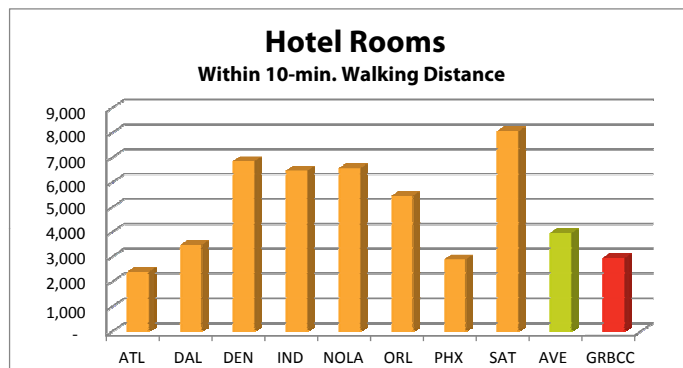
The Hilton Americas opened in 2003 with pedestrian bridges connecting it to the GRBCC. It has served the Convention Center well in the past eight years. Inside the hotel are a couple of dining options and lounge/bars. Unfortunately, they are internal to the hotel with no street presence or visible draw to pedestrians.

In March 2011, the Embassy Suites opened on Dallas Street adjacent to the Hilton Americas. The addition of this 262-suite hotel provides another convenient lodging option for convention-goers, but like other nearby hotels, its dining and lounge facilities do not engage the street and pedestrians. It is hoped that, in the future, the convention district has a substantially larger mix of hotel offerings connected, adjacent or proximate to the GRBCC.

Room Occupancy Sources

Hotels near a convention center are dependent on non-convention business to fill rooms between events. Proximity to business centers, sports and entertainment venues draw out-of-town guests. Ballrooms and meeting room packages promote opportunities for both local and out-of-town groups. It is the combination of business, leisure, meeting and convention activities that provide a balanced economic model for convention center hotels.

Atlanta's Omni hotel is located in the CNN Center and does a considerable amount of business and leisure occupancy in addition to its adjacent location to the Georgia World Congress Center. The



Total number of hotel rooms by city within a 10-min. walk

TOP 5 HOTELS BY CAPACITY WITHIN 10-MINUTE WALKING DISTANCE

	# of Rooms	Distance to Convention Center (in miles)
ATLANTA		
Omni	1,070	0.2
Embassy Suites	321	0.3
Marriott Downtown	312	0.4
Holiday Inn Express	260	0.5
Centennial Inn	135	0.4
DALLAS		
Omni	1,001	0.1*
Hyatt Regency	1,120	0.5
Adolphus	422	0.4
Magnolia	329	0.5
Crowne Plaza	296	0.4
DENVER		
Hyatt Regency Denver	1,100	0.1
Sheraton Denver	1,231	0.3
Denver Marriott City Center	601	0.3
Grand Hyatt San Antonio	516	0.3
Westin Denver Downtown	430	0.5
INDIANAPOLIS		
JW Marriott	1,005	0.1*
Marriott	622	0.1*
Westin	573	0.1
Hyatt	499	0.1*
Omni Severin	424	0.2
NEW ORLEANS		
Hilton Riverside	1,622	0.3
Harrah's	450	0.4
W Hotel	410	0.4
Embassy Suites	370	0.1
Doubletree	367	0.5
ORLANDO		
Peabody Orlando	1,641	0.5
Hilton Orlando	1,400	0.4
Rosen Centre	1,334	0.2
Westin Imagine	315	0.2
Clarion Inn & Suites	221	0.3
PHOENIX		
Sheraton	1,000	0.2
Hyatt Regency	693	0.1
Wyndham	520	0.1
Westin	242	0.4
Hotel San Carlos	128	0.2
SAN ANTONIO		
Grand Hyatt San Antonio	1,003	0.1*
Marriott River Center	997	0.1
Hilton Palacio del Rio	481	0.1
Westin Riverwalk	473	0.3
Drury Plaza	380	0.4
HOUSTON		
Hilton Americas	1,200	0.1*
Four Seasons	404	0.3
Magnolia Hotel	314	0.5
Embassy Suites	262	0.2
Club Quarters	255	0.5

*Attached

KEY DRIVERS: HOTELS PACKAGE

Hilton and Marriott offer considerable internal meeting packages.

With the opening of the attached Omni Hotel, the first hurdle in Dallas' lack of convention hotel space is cleared.

The Hyatt Regency, although geographically close, is viewed as somewhat remote due to multiple rail lines that create a barrier across the front of the property; the pedestrian pathway to the Center from this hotel is "unfriendly." Bussing is required to assemble a significant hotel room block for larger groups.

Denver has a concentration of convention, business and leisure activities in its city center, bolstered by the downtown location of its government center, professional sports stadiums and robust shopping areas. Several other large hotels (Westin, Ritz Carlton) are located in this core area slightly farther from the Convention Center.

Indianapolis' convention hotels are adjacent to the State Capitol building and near Lucas Oil Stadium, providing a large amount of business and some leisure occupancy. Also, there are many small hotel properties located throughout the downtown area.

The convention district needs almost 2,000 new hotel rooms in order to remain competitive with the lodging capacity of other convention destination cities.

New Orleans' Hilton Riverfront is adjacent to Harrah's Casino; the New Orleans Marriott and Sheraton New Orleans market themselves as a joint meetings venue and are adjacent to the French Quarter. With over 20,000 rooms available in and around the Vieux Carre, many are used during large meetings and conventions.

Orlando's convention hotels are located 12 miles from the central business district and have minimal business travel occupancy. Due to their proximate location to Sea World Florida, Universal Studios and



Holiday Inn Express



Embassy Suites

the shopping/dining opportunities along International Drive, the convention hotels generate sufficient leisure occupancy during non-convention peak seasons.

Even with the recent opening of the city-supported Sheraton Hotel, Phoenix remains deficient in its downtown hotel supply. Demand from business travelers is not particularly large in downtown and downtown hotels garner almost no occupancy from leisure travelers other than the transient occupancy achieved by the Holiday Inn Express.

Similar to Orlando, San Antonio's main convention hotels also rely upon leisure travel to supplement their meetings-related occupancy. Many smaller hotel properties are located near the Riverwalk and the Alamo.

The Hilton Americas Hotel, connected to the GRBCC by a pedestrian bridge, is the primary hotel for convention business. Additionally, it serves local business and civic organizations for large meetings. Other nearby hotels include the Four Seasons (4 blocks away), Holiday Inn Express (3 blocks away) and the new Embassy Suites (2 blocks away). While the variety of downtown hotels provide a mix of price points attractive to a diverse convention crowd, the inconvenience of distance and lack of amenities along the pedestrian route detract from the overall experience.

Recommendations

The GRBCC needs to immediately add a minimum of 1,000 rooms to the proximate downtown inventory to reach the threshold provided in most competitive cities. Almost 2,000 additional rooms would be needed to match the average number of rooms per exhibition space in the competitive set. Two new hotels of 1,000+ rooms each could meet this need successfully.

Due to the time required between shows for set-up and tear-down, peak event activity constitutes only about one-third of the total duration of convention facility use. The new convention center hotel can therefore anticipate that roughly 35% of its occupancy would be generated directly from the GRBCC. The balance of room occupancy needed for the operation to break-even must come from in-house meetings/conferences, business travelers and/or leisure travelers. Because of this, the new hotel will need a large compliment of dedicated meeting and ballroom space in order to be economically viable. A property located near Minute Maid Park or the Toyota Center may pick up some leisure occupancy, but most internally-generated occupancy will come from in-house meetings and business travelers. ■

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS *Hotels*

- The GRBCC needs to immediately add a minimum of 1,000 rooms to the proximate downtown inventory to reach the threshold provided in most competitive cities.
- An “attached” convention center hotel is preferred to “adjacent” locations or “proximate” locations.
- Meeting Planners prefer dealing with fewer (and larger) hotels that are located nearby to meet their inventory needs
- Meeting Planners prefer avoiding the expense of shuttle bussing from remote hotels

KEY DRIVERS: TRANSPORTATION

Transportation needs fall into two categories, macro and micro, and depend on the profile of the attendees. On the macro-level, air lift capacity is critical for events with a large national or international audience. Dense urban settings or coastal cities better support fly-in attendance; commuter rail is practical in the Northeast corridor. For regional events, drive-in access becomes a more prominent concern for the meeting planner. Most Midwestern cities are served by multiple interstate highways and most regional attendees are accustomed to driving to these destinations. On the micro-level, local transportation infrastructure is considered in moving crowds between the hotels, convention center and area attractions and activities. Taxis, shuttles, busses, trams and subways are all considered by planners.

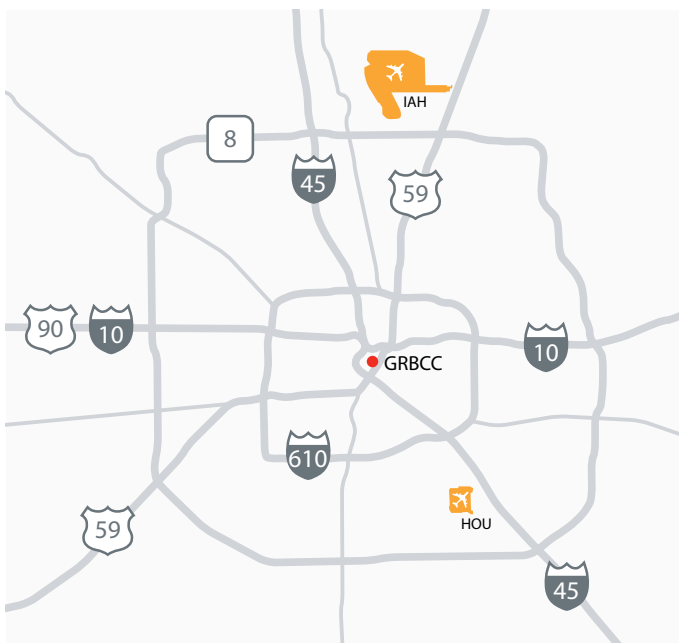
Regional Context

Airports Visitors arriving by scheduled air service have two airport options: Bush Intercontinental Airport, 22 miles to the north; and Hobby Airport, 10 miles to the south. Travel times between the airports and the GRBCC are 33 minutes and 21 minutes respectively.

Highway System Major highways connecting the GRBCC to important origins of visitors include Interstate Highway 45 (Dallas and Galveston), Interstate 10 (East and west coasts and points between), US Highway 59 (Northeast Texas, northeast United States, southwest Texas, and Mexico), and US Highway 290 (Austin and the northwest United States). These are all high-volume, high-speed freeways built to high standards. Essentially all truck traffic and most passenger car traffic to and from the GRBCC uses at least one of these freeways.

Local Context

The GRBCC is strategically located on the east edge of Downtown Houston, bounded by Rusk Street, Polk Street, US Highway 59, and Avenida de las Americas (ADLA) on the north, south, east, and west respectively. It is served by the downtown street grid and has access to US Highway 59 (US 59) which in turn has nearby connections to IH 45 and IH 10. Surface streets with direct service to the GRBCC include Avenida de las Americas (ADLA), Hamilton, Chartres, Rusk, Walker, McKinney, Dallas, Lamar, and Polk.



Regional Highway Network



Street access to the GRBCC

The downtown segment of the Southeast Line of the LRT, currently under construction, will serve the north end of the building. The eastbound track will be on Rusk Street, curving to the north beginning at ADLA and passing under US 59 at the Texas Avenue underpass. The westbound track will cross under US 59 at Texas Avenue, then curve to the south to join Capitol Street at ADLA. The Convention District Stations, with platforms located where Capitol and Rusk intersect ADLA, are the nearest stations to the GRBCC.

Services Access to the GRBCC Service to the site is mostly on the east side of the building by way of one-way northbound Chartres Street. Most large trucks and smaller service vehicles reach the back of the building this way. Large trucks access the upper level via a ramp accessible from the intersection of Rusk at Chenevert near the northwest corner of the building. This one-way ramp takes trucks to the upper level where they load and unload, then depart to the south. After they depart, these trucks re-enter the street system at a driveway just north of the intersection of Clay at Chenevert.

The redevelopment underway on both sides of US 59 make it important to preserve capacity on east-west streets in this area.

Surrounding Road Capacity The one-way street grid serving downtown and the area east of US 59 is interrupted by US 59, the GRBCC, and other developments in the eastern part of downtown. As a result, Polk Street is the only remaining east-west street serving both sides of US 59 between Rusk and Bell, a distance of 2,300 feet.

The east side of downtown bounded by Texas, Bell, US 59, and Austin presently has approximately ten full undeveloped blocks which are presently used, for the most part, for surface parking. All these blocks are subject to development, which could generate significant additional pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

The land east of US 59 is largely industrial, and redevelopment in this area will result in higher trip generation rates than existing land use. Therefore, more of the trips generated by the future land use will be downtown-oriented than present traffic patterns. These facts and the redevelopment underway on both sides of US 59 make it important to preserve capacity on east-west streets in this area.

Wayfinding The GRBCC website (<http://www.houstonconventionctr.com/Home/MapsParking.aspx>) has detailed information for visitors

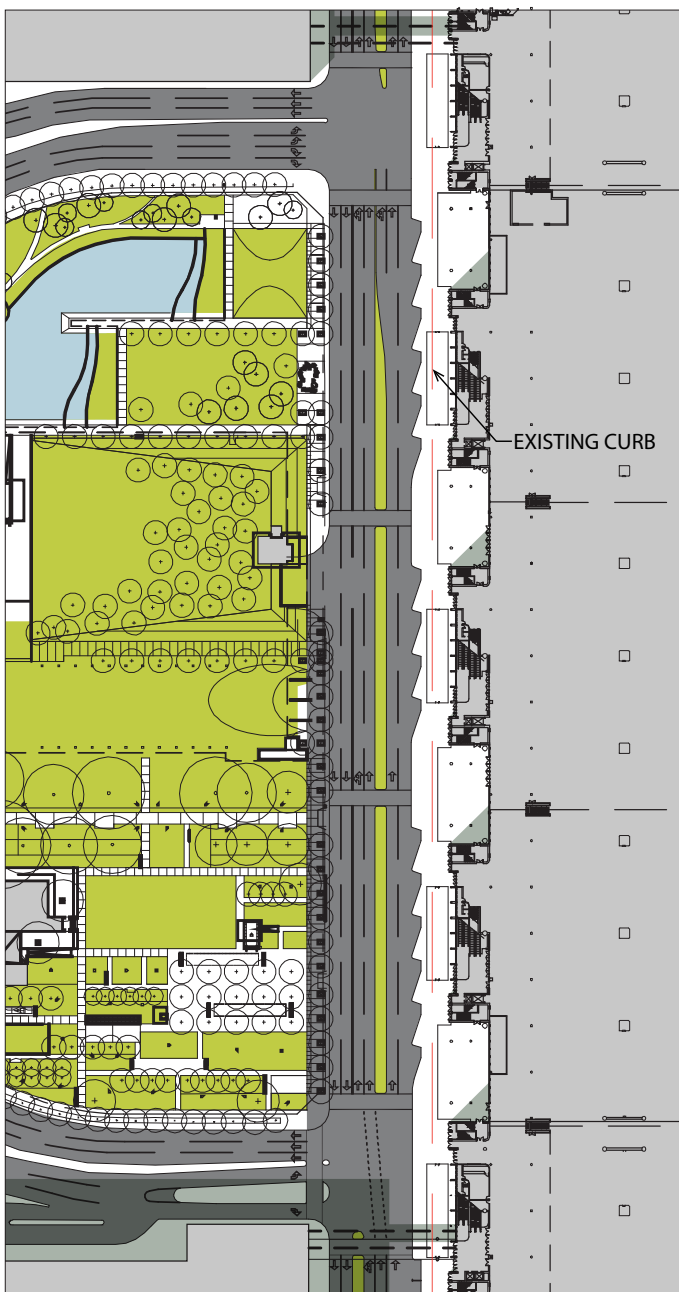
arriving from all directions. The Downtown Management District has installed a wayfinding system with cantilever mounted signs throughout downtown. The Convention Center is included as one of the destinations on this system.

Pedestrians Existing and future pedestrian use in the area will consist of a number of different types of pedestrians. The safety and welfare of these diverse user types will need to be considered as expansion and infrastructure decisions are made. Different types of pedestrians include:

- Workers in downtown and east of downtown
- GRBCC visitors from nearby hotels
- GRBCC visitors exploring the area on foot
- Residents who live in the area
- Nighttime visitors to area entertainment venues
- Families and other visitors to Discovery Green park
- People attending sports venues including Minute Maid Park, the Dynamo Stadium, and Toyota Center

KEY DRIVERS: TRANSPORTATION

In order to accommodate peak traffic conditions and also improve the pedestrian experience at the GRBCC, serious consideration should be given to reconfiguring ADLA.

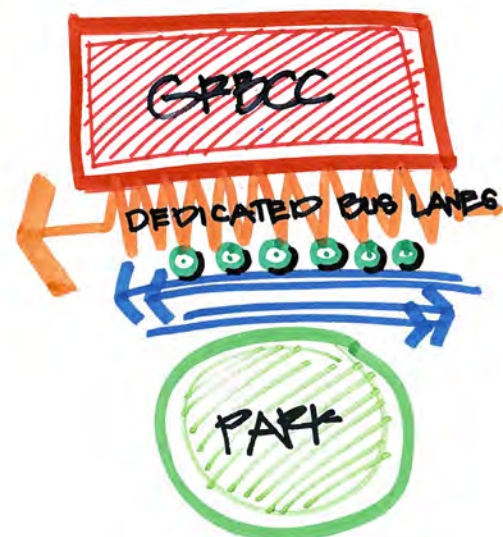


Proposed ADLA Reconfiguration

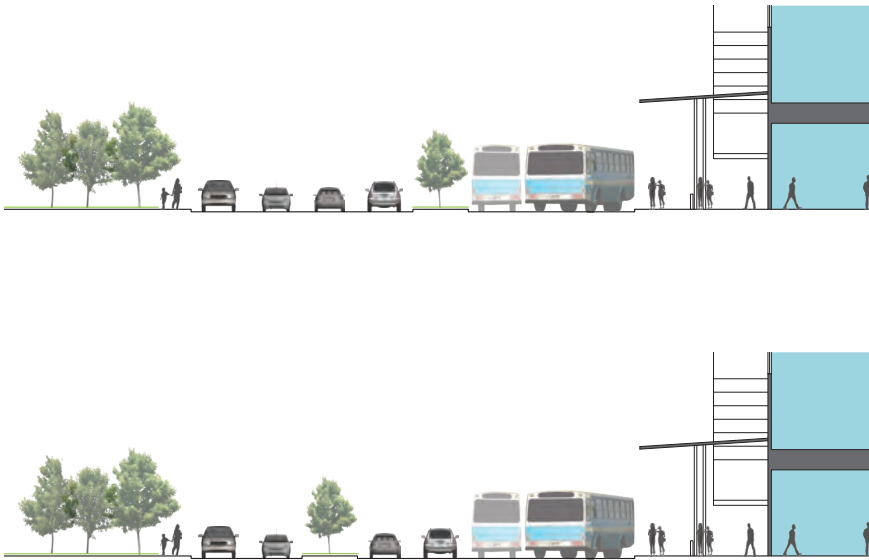
Avenida De Las Americas (ADLA)

ADLA presently has an eight-lane boulevard cross section. Typically, each roadway is approximately 44' wide with added width at turning lanes at intersections. Because the street is only 2,300 feet long with 'T' intersections at each end, its capacity is essentially never needed for moving traffic. This street width is used for angle parking of buses at large events.

The GRBCC attracts large numbers of visitors to its events, often requiring buses from remote parking sites and hotels. It is at these events that ADLA is used to load, unload, and stage buses. While it is tempting to consider options of reducing the width of ADLA to make it more pedestrian-friendly, any consideration of narrowing the street needs to keep the "big event" function of the street in mind.



ADLA Reconfiguration Concept Diagram



Possible Reconfigurations of ADLA

Recommendations

Polk Street will serve as the only connection between downtown and the area east of US 59 from Rusk to Bell. It is important that the traffic-moving function of Polk be preserved and enhanced. All GRBCC expansion options should provide for a four-lane cross section on Polk, with added turning lanes at important intersections as dictated by local conditions. The street will also serve east-west pedestrian traffic and should have sidewalks consistent with the large crowds that will be present at major GRBCC events and events at surrounding venues in the area.

The overall width of ADLA is wider than warranted by traffic volumes; however, its width is

utilized by bus loading and unloading at major events. In order to balance the need to accommodate peak traffic conditions and also improve the pedestrian arrival/registration experience during large events at the GRBCC, serious consideration should be given to the reconfiguration of ADLA. This could include a reduction of lanes and relocation of the traffic island to allow for a wider sidewalk in front of the Convention Center, expansion of the western facade to increase ground level interior spaces, and/or designated pickup/drop-off zones for buses and passenger vehicles. ■

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

Transportation

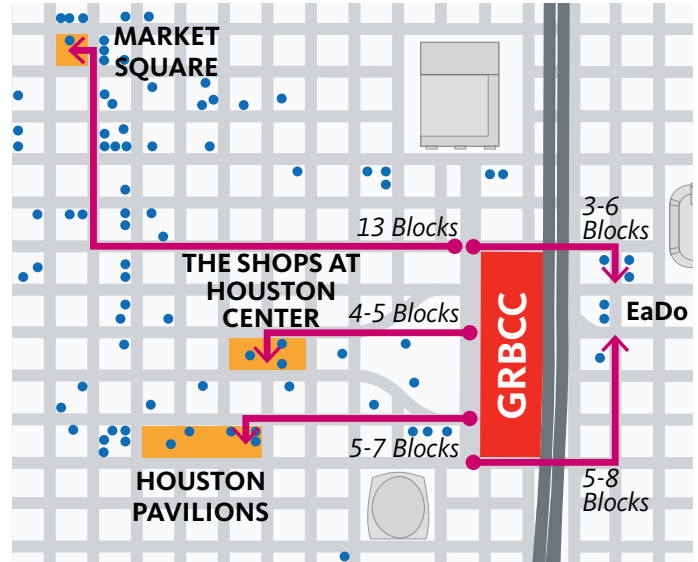
- Future development around the GRBCC will generate significant increases in pedestrian and vehicle traffic.
- It is important that the traffic-moving function of Polk be preserved and enhanced with sidewalks to accommodate event crowds.
- The configuration of ADLA should be reconsidered to reconcile low day-to-day traffic volume with the need to accommodate peak traffic volume during large events.

KEY DRIVERS: **ATTRACTIONS & ACTIVITIES**

Attendees and their guests look for shopping, dining, entertainment and other activities at some point during their stay for a convention. Many destinations have branded themselves as “family friendly” and attracted visitors who stay longer (either pre- or post-convention). Boston, Nashville, Orlando, San Antonio, and San Diego have excelled in this approach. A similar cultural or adult offering is provided in Las Vegas, New York, New Orleans, and San Francisco by combining the business aspects of the meeting with a personal get-away.

A key observation about Houston expressed by exhibitors and industry experts in hospitality, meeting planning, and tourism concerned the lack of attractions (restaurants, bars/clubs, shopping, entertainment) within convenient walking distance to the Convention Center. Although a variety of dining options are available downtown, many are located in the underground tunnel system or at upper-level food courts. These restaurants are not visible from the street and are often overlooked by out-of-town visitors.

The Houston Pavilions, located 5-7 blocks to the southwest of the Convention Center, provides the most concentrated group of shops, restaurants and entertainment venues. The Historic District, 10-13 blocks to the northwest of the GRBCC, offers a vari-



Proximity to Entertainment/Shopping Nodes and Restaurants

ety of restaurants with the largest concentration occurring around and near Market Square Park. On the far west side of downtown, the Theater District features a diverse array of music and theater shows.

East of the Convention Center, directly across US 59 is the East Downtown Management District, EaDo. Plans for hotels and retail development in this area have been discussed in recent years, but at this time there are limited options in EaDo to attract visitors and conventioners, and pedestrian



Houston Pavilions



Minute Maid Park

access from the GRBCC is not attractive or well-defined.

The GRBCC is flanked by two major sports venues, Minute Maid Park (Houston Astros) and Toyota Center (Houston Rockets). Groundbreaking for the new MLS stadium (Houston Dynamo) took place in 2011 and is located east of US 59, five blocks northeast of the Convention Center. These venues, however, are driven by their respective sport's schedules and any alignment with convention events is coincidental.

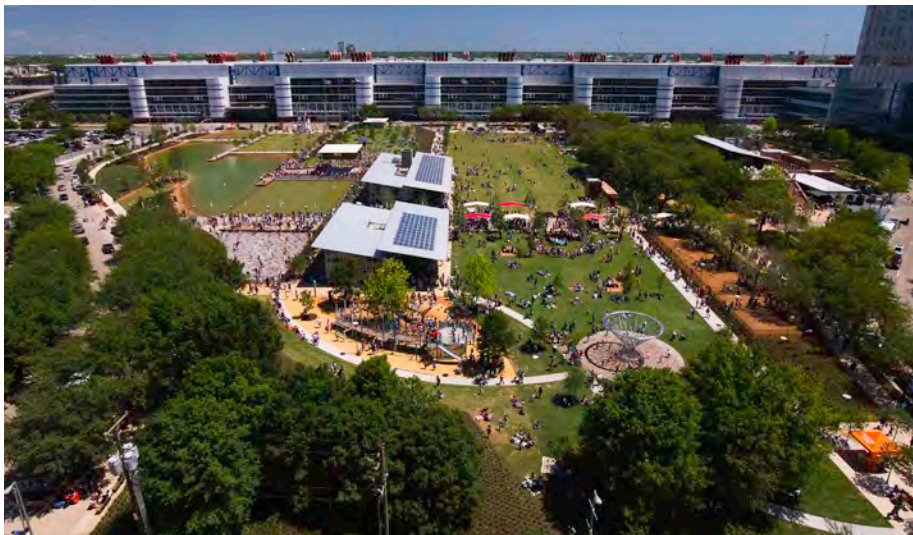
Discovery Green, across the street from the Convention Center, represents the city's finest example of public open space and serves as the 'front door' to the GRBCC.

Recommendations

Primary consideration should be given to any and all future development in the vicinity of

the GRBCC. Future hotels, residential buildings, office towers and parking garages should be designed to accommodate restaurants, bars and retail shops at the street level. This approach to the creation of a convention district should be aggressively encouraged by the City of Houston when negotiating with developers. Activating the streets with local residents, downtown workers, conventioners and visitors attracted by the shops, restaurants and entertainment venues will create a vibrant, safe convention district that appeals to meeting planners and exhibitors.

Consideration should also be given to enhancing the pedestrian corridor that links the GRBCC to established developments like the Houston Pavilions. The City can foster connectivity between venues by making the street-level pedestrian experience interesting, comfortable and safe. ■



Discovery Green

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

Attractions

- There is a lack of attractions and amenities within convenient walking distance to the GRBCC.
- All future development in the vicinity should accommodate restaurants, bars and retail shops at the street level.
- Enhancement of pedestrian corridors that link the GRBCC to established entertainment districts like the Houston Pavilions should be a priority.

KEY DRIVERS: SAFETY & SECURITY

Throughout the history of the American Society of Association Executives' survey, safety and security was a prime consideration for meeting planners. Since 9/11, this factor has been enshrined in the top five selection criteria. Many destinations (Atlanta, New Orleans, New York, and Phoenix) have addressed security by adding host ambassador personnel within defined tourist zones. Protecting visitors must be a prime directive for a successful convention destination and, in many places, perception differs from statistical reality. Some convention destinations are perceived as safe, but score comparatively high in property and other crimes.

Compared to its competitor cities, Houston is a safe destination for local residents, conventioners and tourists. The reality of a safe environment



Surface parking west of the GRBCC



Undeveloped lots south of the GRBCC



Underpass below US 59

around the Convention Center is best illustrated by the daily influx of visitors, families and downtown workers to Discovery Green across the street from the GRBCC.

However, the reality can be overshadowed by the public's perception of personal safety when in the immediate vicinity of the GRBCC due to several factors, including:

- Minimal non-convention pedestrian traffic in the area except for activities in Discovery Green
- A considerable number of undeveloped parcels and surface parking lots adjacent to the GRBCC
- The pedestrian corridor under Highway 59 is dark and unattractive
- The EaDo District, immediately east of the GRBCC, is a mix of warehouses, abandoned buildings, vacant lots and small commercial businesses

Human nature and the demographics (where they live; age; etc.) of conventioners are key considerations for understanding their perceptions of a place. Out of town visitors unfamiliar with the area will be hesitant to venture far in search of food, shopping and entertainment. Clearly articulated pedestrian corridors and wayfinding tools (signage, kiosks, iconic street elements) will promote exploration and discovery by visitors.



East Downtown at Chartres St.

Elderly visitors are unlikely to walk great distances and will generally return to their off-site hotel in a car or bus rather than seek dining and shopping opportunities several blocks away from the GRBCC. Shuttles and downtown trolleys can provide access to a variety of Houston's downtown districts and ameni-

pedestrians on the street increases. This, in turn, will create the perception and support the reality of a safe, welcoming environment for people of all ages.

Recommendations

Primary consideration should be given to city policies and public support for the aggressive development of a second convention center hotel, residential buildings and retail/restaurant/entertainment venues. Activating the streets with local residents, downtown workers and visitors attracted by the shops, restaurants and entertainment venues will create a vibrant, safe convention district that appeals to meeting planners and exhibitors. ■

Protecting visitors must be a prime directive for a successful convention destination and, in many places, perception differs from statistical reality.

ties for both visitors and residents and, as a result, supports downtown businesses.

As more opportunities are developed for visitors to stay and play in the immediate area around the GRBCC, the potential for more

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

Safety & Security

- City policies and public support for development of a second convention center hotel, residential buildings and entertainment venues are needed.
- Activating the streets with local residents, conventioners and visitors will create a vibrant, safe convention district that appeals to meeting planners and exhibitors.

LONG RANGE STRATEGY: **METHODOLOGY**

Planning for urban civic projects differs from the long range strategies for universities and corporations who are generally less dependent on the decisions, actions and timelines of others outside of their control. Universities and civic entities may share similar challenges related to funding and the allocation of resources, but the university controls the streets, infrastructure, building adjacencies and project timelines for the entire campus. Corporations and civic entities may share similarities in the complexity of their organizational structure, but corporations are self-funding and less reliant on the actions of off-campus stakeholders.

During the development of the George R. Brown Convention Center 2025 Master Plan, it became apparent that the future success of the Convention Center is heavily reliant upon the investments and actions of others outside of the GRBCC's control. Any future expansion of the Convention Center facilities or realization of a long range strategy is dependent on considerable private sector development around the GRBCC and meaningful support by the City of Houston in the guise of policy changes, private investment incentives and infrastructure improvements.

Planning Methodology

The 2025 Master Plan takes a 15-year outlook on the opportunities for transforming the Central Business District's east end. While the Master Plan is written from the GRBCC's perspective and the focus, in many regards, is on the various options for expansion of the Convention Center's facilities, many of the key drivers influencing the future of the GRBCC exist outside its walls and authority.

Gensler and its consultants, working closely with the GRBCC and Central Houston Civic Improvement leadership, explored a wide range of possible

scenarios for future development in and around the Convention Center. Each scenario takes a holistic district-wide approach to solutions, acknowledging the interdependence between the Convention Center and neighborhood.

Planning Scenarios The five scenarios in this report represent a distillation of ideas from multiple concepts developed in the early stages of the project and fall into one of four categories:

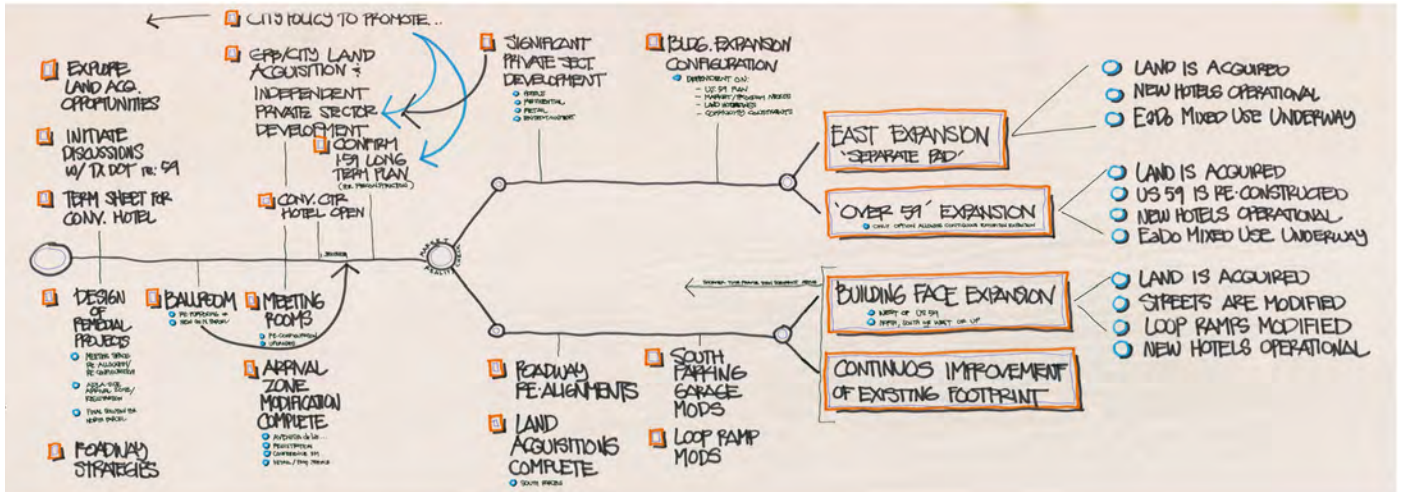
- Expansion East of US 59
- Expansion Over US 59
- Expansion West of US 59
- No Expansion/Continuous Upgrades

It was important to the planning process that every possible option be explored regardless of the practicality or number of obstacles in its path. In order

**... a holistic district-wide approach. . .
acknowledging the interdependence between
convention center and neighborhood.**

for the GRBCC and the City of Houston to commit themselves and their resources to promote future growth in the convention district, assurance was needed that all ideas had been considered and that a balance of interests of all stakeholders was a priority when evaluating the viability of each option. Ideas that were explored and eventually dropped for various reasons included:

- Expanding the GRBCC vertically and making the current roof the next level for needed spaces
- Parking on the roof of the GRBCC
- Building expansion and/or pedestrian bridges on top of US 59
- Closure of Polk Street to allow for contiguous expansion southward



Planning Charrette - Decision/Action Timeline Path

Each option shown has its merits with varying degrees of opportunities and constraints. Some options were found to have more champions than others after meeting with various stakeholders and interested parties over a three-month period. Information/coordination meetings engaged:

- Local stakeholders including Incarnate Word Academy, hotel operators and area businesses
- Local developers with planned projects in the pipeline
- City agencies with adjacent projects like the Texas Heritage Discovery Center
- Representatives of the Mayor's Office
- Consultant team working on a parallel planning project for Livable Centers

Coordination with concurrent building and planning projects by others, together with the input from stakeholders, were key considerations in the development of the long-range scenarios found in this report.

Decision/Action Timeline During the planning charrette conducted in January 2011, attendees developed a timeline of actions and decision points that would guide the GRBCC on its path to one of several possible end-states for expansion. In simple terms, the timeline on the following page illustrates:

- If certain actions are completed and objectives achieved, the following end-states are possible, or...
- If certain actions are not completed nor objectives achieved, the following end-states are possible.

In this timeline, although somewhat arbitrary, the first key decision point comes at the five-year mark. In the first five years of the timeline, two parallel tracks of activities occur: (1) business-as-usual with ongoing improvements of the GRBCC; and (2) strategic positioning for facility expansion. The extent to which those activities and initiatives are accomplished will be assessed at the five-year decision point when a "Market Reality Check" is conducted to determine the GRBCC's strategic options for going forward. For example, in most of the expansion options for the GRBCC, land acquisition is required. In the draft timeline above developed during the charrette as well as the timeline on the following page, land acquisition is shown as a strategic action. Whether or not the City of Houston acquires the needed land in the near term will influence the decisions made and the direction taken by the GRBCC regarding future expansion. Depending on shifts in the economy and market demand, the actual time frame for these actions and decisions could be accelerated or delayed. ■

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS LONG RANGE STRATEGY: SCHEME E



Contiguous Superblock

The Big Idea behind Scheme E is the significant expansion of the GRBCC to the south on a new 'superblock' comprised of four city blocks. The existing facility and proposed expansion are connected over Polk Street at Levels 2 and 3. The expansion satisfies anticipated future needs for additional exhibit hall, meeting room and ballroom space with 565,000 sf of new space.

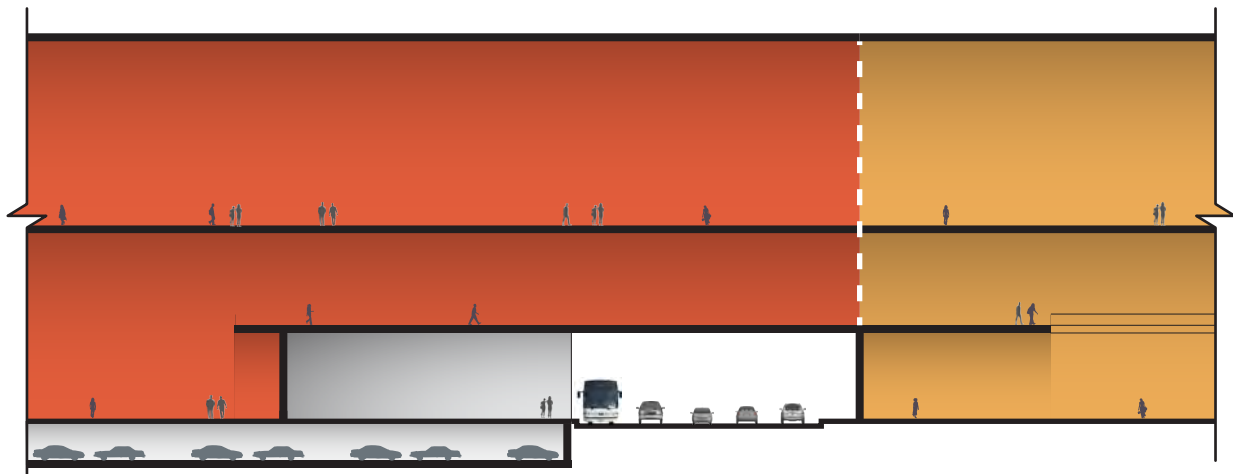
Scheme E represents the highest and best use of low profile land parcels between US 59 and the backsides of Toyota Center and the GRBCC. The relationship between the Convention Center and Toyota Center (already used to serve some convention events) are reinforced in this scheme. The expansion building creates a new 'front door' to the GRBCC along Polk Street that will help strengthen the connection to future development across US 59 in EaDo.

East-west traffic is not impacted by creation of the superblock. The closure of Chenevert simplifies the 3-stoplight congestion on Polk Street that currently exists between Chenevert, ADLA and Jackson. The closure of Clay Street between Jackson and Hamilton is inconsequential to traffic flow. The existing Hilton Americas Garage would be replaced with underground parking beneath the new expansion building and supplemented by use of the existing Tundra Garage.

In Scheme E, the block adjacent to Discovery Green includes two residential towers sharing a multi-level podium of parking and street-level retail and dining. The parcel to its north shows the proposed convention center hotel connected to the GRBCC via pedestrian bridges. Additionally, a new garage is proposed for the surface lot north of the GRBCC that will serve the parking needs of the new hotel and also make up the spaces lost when the surface lots on these parcels are developed.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS *Scheme E*

- Highest & best use of low-profile land parcels
- Simplifies traffic at Polk & ADLA intersection
- Strengthens connectivity between the GRBCC & Toyota Center
- Creates new 'front door' to future EaDo development
- Capitalizes on under-utilized Tundra garage
- Minor street closures of Chenevert and Clay Streets
- Demolition of existing Hilton Americas garage



Schematic Section Looking West
1" = 50'

GRBCC 2025 PLAN



Aerial view of proposed development in the Convention District

The vision for the future of the GRBCC extends beyond the walls of the Convention Center and includes the businesses, residents, public agencies and other stakeholders of Houston's downtown east end. The future development and success of the GRBCC cannot be fully realized without the future development and success of the 'convention district.'

The plan does not infer a one-time all-in development project. It is envisioned and understood that the proposed development, enhancements and expansion will occur in phases over an extended period of time.

As discussed earlier in this report, the timeline for development is fluid and heavily influenced by certain decisions and actions by the City of Houston and private sector. For example, future expansion of the Convention Center is not a viable consideration until (1) new hotel development providing the needed rooms and amenities is in place; and (2) the City of Houston acquires the land where the proposed expansion is planned.

2025 Plan

The 2025 Plan illustrates a best-case scenario for the future expansion of the GRBCC, improvements to existing infrastructure including Avenida de las

Americas and proposed public/private development of the surrounding area. The plan's primary focus area is bounded by U.S. 59, Texas Avenue, Crawford and Bell Streets. The plan, however, recognizes the importance of areas outside the focus area like EaDo and the downtown entertainment/shopping district and addresses the need for connectivity.

In order to address the anticipated need for expanded exhibition and meeting space in a meaningful way, the preferred option places GRBCC Phase III on four city blocks south of Polk Street, connected to the existing Convention Center via a pedestrian bridge at both the concourse and upper levels.

Improvements to Avenida de las Americas (ADLA) and Polk Street are planned with the most significant changes anticipated with the reconfiguration of ADLA. Improved traffic flow, peak-event bus operations and enhanced pedestrian mobility are key drivers in the proposed modifications to ADLA.

In the multi-block zone north of the GRBCC, between the Convention Center, Minute Maid Park and Incarnate Word Academy, the plan reflects the desired mix of land uses – Residential, Hospitality, Retail, Entertainment – that will foster the notion of a thriving, active, sustainable downtown community and create a desirable destination for Houstonians, out-of-town visitors and conventioners.

On the following pages, key aspects of the 2025 Plan will be described in greater detail, including:

- Hotels
- District Amenities
- Street Improvements
- Pedestrian Connectivity
- GRBCC Phase III

Hotels

The need for hotel rooms nearby, adjacent and connected to the Convention Center has been recognized and stated many times during the course

of this study. In November 2010, a Hotel Advisory Panel met to discuss considerations for the City of Houston and the GRBCC regarding the need and potential strategies for a future hotel adjacent to and serving the Convention Center.

In December 2010, an Industry Advisory Group comprised of event specialists, meeting planners and exhibitors from across the nation participated in an all-day vision session to share their observations and make recommendations for the future expansion of the GRBCC and development of the surrounding area related to amenities, character and hotel room supply.

The main conclusion from both groups is that the GRBCC is severely lacking the hotel room supply to be competitive with peer cities for drawing major shows.



GRBCC 2025 PLAN

The 2025 Plan identifies proposed locations for future hotels nearby, adjacent and connected to the Convention Center. Key factors influencing the proposed locations include site opportunity, access and proximity to the GRBCC and other major venues/districts.

Block 99 is considered a prime hotel location due to its adjacency to Discovery Green and potential for connectivity via pedestrian bridge to the GRBCC. Many see this site as ideal for developing a ‘mirror-image’ of the Hilton Americas Hotel located immediately south of the park. A new parking structure is proposed on Block 160, immediately north of the GRBCC, serving both the new hotel and Convention Center.

Others consider Block 99 to be ideally suited for a shared use residential tower and boutique hotel concept due to the marketability of Discovery

Green to potential downtown residents. This, in turn, would make Block 100/120 the preferred site for a large, convention center hotel. In either case, development of Blocks 99 and 100/120 as hotel sites supports the near- and long term needs of the GRBCC and the convention district.

A hotel is planned for the corner of Polk Street and Chartres Avenue, one block southeast of the Convention Center across US 59. Final design and construction of this hotel is unknown at the time of this report. To complete a ‘four-corners’ hotel concept desired by the GRBCC, the plan includes a hotel on the corner of Rusk Street and Chartres Avenue, one block northeast of the Convention Center.

Street Improvements

Operationally, the success of the Convention Center is impacted by the streets that provide access



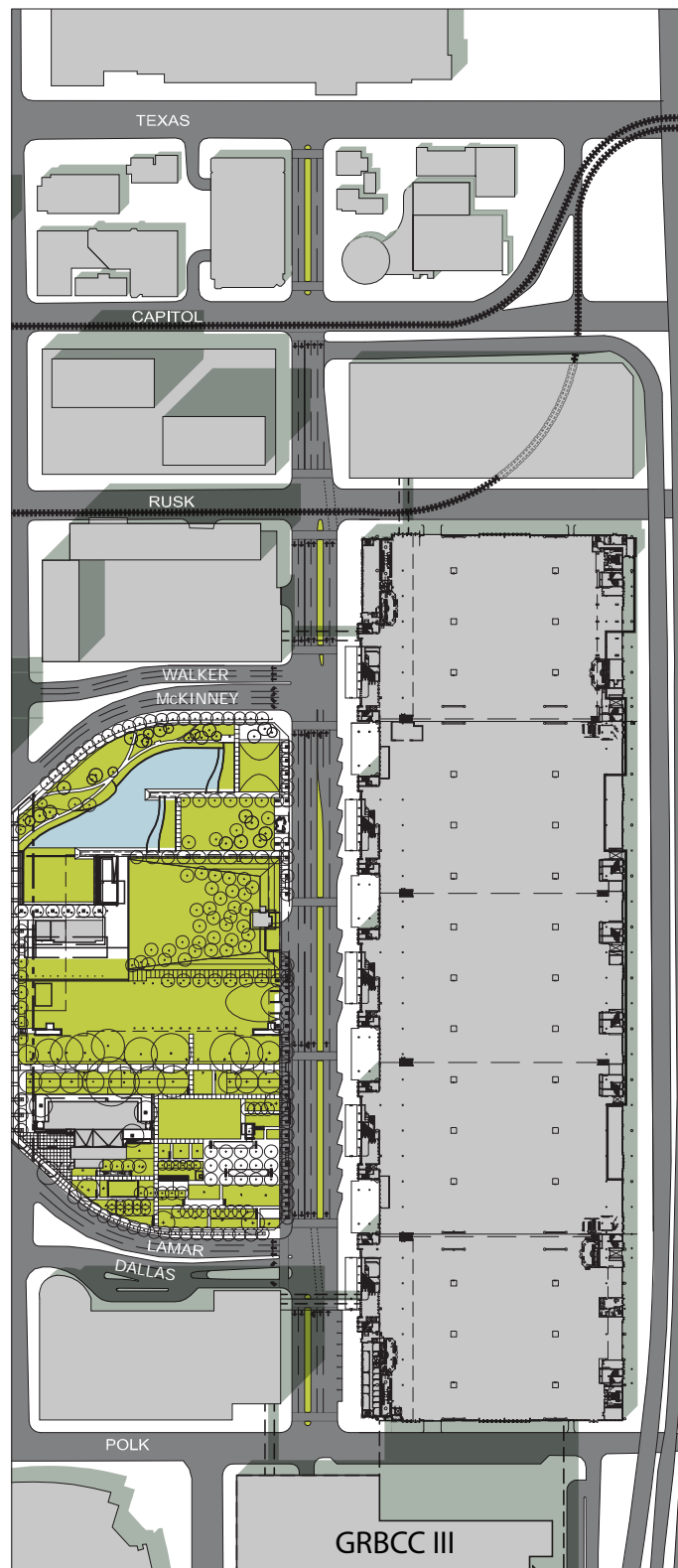
View of proposed hotel and realignment of Avenida de las Americas

to the facility. Logical, easy-to-understand routes are important to visitors unfamiliar with the area. Dedicated pick-up/drop-off zones for bus operators during peak-load events foster a safe, efficient process for accommodating off-site visitors. Separation of service zones from high-volume vehicle and pedestrian traffic areas is preferred for both safety and aesthetic reasons.

The plan's game-changer regarding street improvements is the proposed reconfiguration of Avenida de las Americas (ADLA). Both vehicular and pedestrian flows will be improved following its completion and it is recommended that the modifications be implemented as soon as possible. The plan claims one traffic lane to widen the sidewalk in front of the GRBCC by 13 feet, allowing large numbers of pedestrians to walk along ADLA comfortably while others queue up to enter the building for a show. The next three lanes are dedicated bus lanes, allowing 30° parking for drop-off/pick-up and a passing lane. The remaining four traffic lanes west of the median will accommodate north-south passenger vehicles. During periods when bus operations are not required, the dedicated bus lanes can accommodate other program uses.

Polk Street is planned for improvements including widening and a drop-off lane in front of the GRBCC Phase III expansion. The closing of Chenevert Street due to Phase III expansion will eliminate the need for the current traffic signal, simplifying today's three-signal condition between Chenevert, ADLA and Jackson Streets. Hamilton will be reduced from four-lanes to two-lanes to accommodate the service lane and loading docks of the future Phase III. In the plan, Rusk Street will remain open. METRO's eastbound LRT and the proposed parking garage on Block 160 are planned to allow vehicular thru-traffic.

Additionally, the 2025 Plan supports enhancement/upgrades to, and development along, Dallas Street which is seen as a major pedestrian connector to the Houston Pavilions shopping and Main Street activities.



Proposed ADLA Reconfiguration

GRBCC 2025 PLAN

District Amenities

How a city is perceived by out-of-town visitors is influenced by the part of the city they experience. Many conventioners and trade show attendees will only experience the part of Houston that exists between their hotel and the Convention Center. Ideally, the convention district should convey the City of Houston's desired image to visitors.

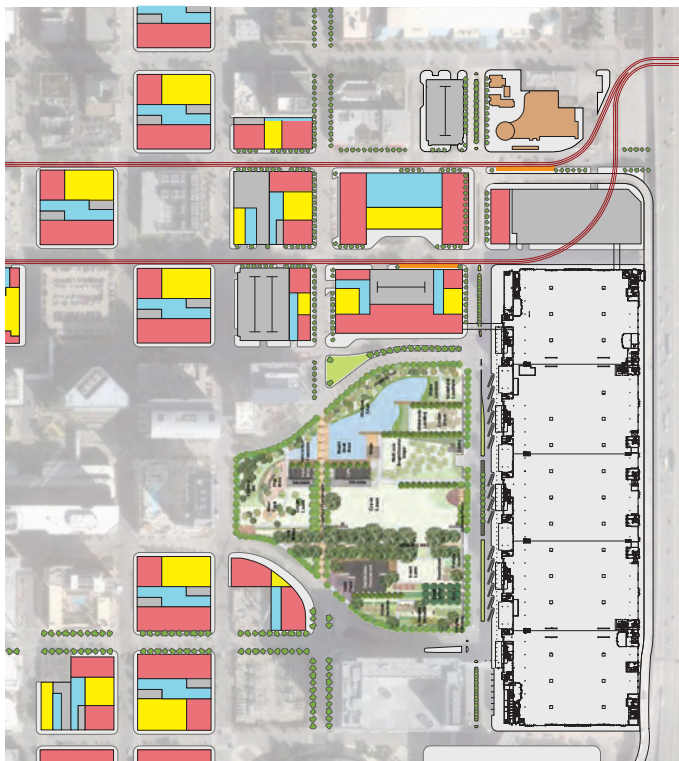
Characteristics of cities that visitors find desirable include:

- Pedestrian friendly
- Active street life
- Convenient dining, shopping and entertainment
- Variety of dining, shopping and entertainment options
- Ease of wayfinding



■ Hotel
 ■ Residential
 ■ Office
 ■ Parking

These same characteristics should be key considerations for all new development surrounding the Convention Center. Treatment of the streets, sidewalks and ground floor programmed spaces in buildings should promote a vitality that supports both the resident community as well as visitors to our city.



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR LAND USE	■ Lobby	■ Retail	■ Parking
	■ TX Heritage Visitor's Ctr.	■ Light Rail Stop	■ Back of House

The 2025 Plan illustrates a balanced mix of land use types with the concentration of non-GRBCC development occurring on the parcels to its north and northwest. The plan fosters the idea of a convention district that supports a resident community and offers amenities that appeal to locals and visitors alike. The plan envisions ground floor space in hotels, residential towers and parking garages to accommodate shops, restaurants and other programmed needs that sustain a thriving community. Creating a 'destination' district that is anchored by Discovery Green will attract Houstonians and their entertainment dollars as well as keep conventioners and visitors in the area during their stay.

Achieving a fully developed convention district with amenities will take years to accomplish and the plan recognizes the importance of enhancing routes from the GRBCC to existing entertainment/shopping districts like the Houston Pavilions. For example, the Dallas Street corridor plays a key role in connecting the area's visitors to the Pavilion's shops, restaurants and clubs 5-7 blocks from the Convention Center.

Pedestrian Connectivity

The vitality of a district is best illustrated by the number of pedestrians and activity on the sidewalks. Pedestrian corridors should foster a sense of safety, comfort, visual interest and sense of direction to enhance the pedestrian experience.

The plan focuses on the importance of pedestrian connectivity to areas near the GRBCC. Until the Convention Center's adjacent blocks are developed with the envisioned hotels, residential, retail and entertainment venues, enhancing the pedestrian links to other hotel, shopping and entertainment districts a little further away in downtown Houston is important.

The proposed reconfiguration of ADLA widens the sidewalk in front of the Convention Center by 12-13 feet, creating more space to accommodate large crowds during peak pedestrian traffic

events. Maintaining and enhancing the east-west corridors of Rusk and Polk Streets will promote a higher utilization by pedestrians traveling to and from the EaDo District east of US 59. Additionally, the GRBCC Phase III expansion suggests a setback of the building facing Polk Street, creating a plaza that serves as a new pedestrian 'front door' for the Convention Center as well as a public space gateway into EaDo.

Dallas Street is important as the key pedestrian connector between GRBCC and the Houston Pavilions shopping and entertainment venues. Upgrades to Dallas Street that improve the visual character of the street, foster mobility for all types of pedestrians and promote safety are strongly encouraged in this plan.

As momentum builds with future development in the convention district, Crawford Street is envi-



Examples of street-centric development sioned to be an important north-south pedestrian corridor linking Discover Green to Minute Maid Park with proposed residential towers, hotels and shops lining the street.



View of proposed pedestrian-oriented development on Crawford Street

GRBCC 2025 PLAN

Phase III Expansion

Originally built in 1987 with Phase II expansion completed in 2003, the GRBCC is a well-managed, well-maintained facility. Despite the analysis that has determined the need for additional meeting space and the marketability of new (and larger) ballroom space, it is understood that several things must happen, including a significant increase in the Convention Center hotel room supply, before future expansion of the GRBCC facilities can be considered.

Future expansion of Convention Center facilities is best accommodated on the four city blocks immediately south of the existing GRBCC. Bounded by Polk, Hamilton, Bell and Jackson Streets, the pro-

posed Phase III will be physically connected to the Convention Center at both the concourse and upper floor levels with no impact to east-west traffic on Polk Street. The location, currently wedged between the GRBCC, US 59, the Hilton Americas Garage and Toyota Center, is a difficult space for other commercial uses but is ideal for the expansion of Convention Center exhibition and meeting space.

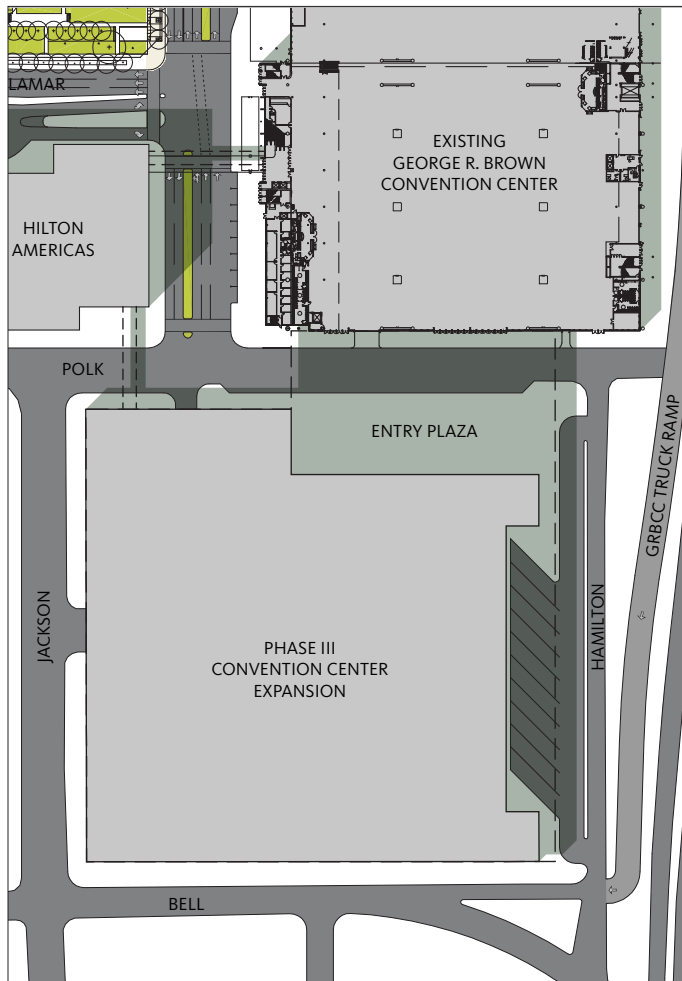
To create the desired ground level exhibition space, the existing Hilton Americas Garage is demolished and replaced with below-grade parking under the Phase III expansion. By doing this, the new Convention Center addition replaces the garage as the dominant feature at the terminus of ADL A. To accommodate a needed service lane/loading dock



Aerial view of proposed development in the Convention District

zone, Hamilton Street has been narrowed from four lanes to two lanes. The GRBCC upper level truck ramp is realigned to allow trucks to exit at Hamilton and Bell Streets.

The Phase III expansion includes 350,000 square feet of exhibition space, 211,000 square feet of meeting/ballroom/program space and up to 114,000 square feet of light exhibit/food & beverage space (provided by the bridge connection to the existing facility). At 257,500 SF, the new below-grade parking below the expansion will accommodate roughly 800 cars. A portion of the Polk Street façade is setback from the street to create a plaza that serves as a new front door to the convention center and gateway to EaDo. ■



Plan of proposed GRBCC expansion

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- Reconfiguring Avenida de las Americas
- Enhancing Pedestrian Corridors / Streetscape

DISTRICT-WIDE STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Master Development Agreement for Mixed Use Projects
 - Convention Center Hotel
 - Parking Garage
 - Residential Tower(s)
 - Retail/Commercial Space/ Services/Amenities
- Policies; Incentives; Public-Private Partnerships
- Phased Development Strategies
- Land Acquisition / Parcel Assemblage

FORMAL CREATION OF CONVENTION DISTRICT

- Clearly Defined Development Zone
 - Design and Development Regulations/Policies
 - District-Specific Graphics and Signage
 - Capital Improvements/ Development/Marketing Focus