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Subject: Officials break ground on \$1.6B Austin Convention Center redevelopment
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Officials break ground on \$1.6B Austin Convention Center redevelopment

Community Impact

By [Ben Thompson](#) | 3:56 PM Apr 17, 2025 CDT



City leaders and members of the Austin Convention Center team signed a construction beam as part of a ceremonial groundbreaking for the facility's redevelopment on April 17. (Ben Thompson/Community Impact)

[Image description](#)



Image description



[Image description](#)

The Austin Convention Center has officially closed its doors ahead of a nearly [four-year, \\$1.6 billion expansion project](#) that city officials marked with a ceremonial groundbreaking April 17.

The big picture

The long-in-the-works redevelopment will see the current convention complex demolished, rebuilt and reopened in time for the 2029 spring festival season.

The new facility will have 620,000 square feet of rentable space, a nearly 70% increase. It will include a larger exhibition hall below-ground and new public areas, pedestrian connections and commercial spaces at street level. The campus will also have room for potential future expansion of up to 140,000 additional square feet.

Austin's new convention center will move hundreds of thousands of square feet of exposition space underground and bring new community features and rentable space

downtown.

(Courtesy Austin Convention Center)

Council member Zo Qadri, who represents District 9 including the convention center, said the new facility will be the world's first zero-carbon convention center [operating on renewable energy](#) and aligning with city environmental and walkability goals.

"These enhancements improve quality of life while fostering a more sustainable and accessible urban environment," he said. "The project is built on a people-first urban design strategy that enhances pedestrian mobility, promotes active transportation and reduces car dependency in the downtown corridor."

The redevelopment is funded entirely through city hotel tax collections that have been reserved for the project. Millions have also been set aside for new public art pieces from local artists that'll go into place around the site.

What they're saying

Mayor Pro Tem Vanessa Fuentes, a former member of the city's Tourism Commission, called the expansion a once-in-a-generation investment. She highlighted the \$750 million in annual economic impact and \$12 million in annual civic tax revenue the new convention facility will generate, as well as the estimated 1,600 local jobs the redevelopment project will create.

"This expansion will support local jobs, uplift small businesses and bring new energy to the heart of our city," Fuentes said at the April 17 groundbreaking.

Mayor Kirk Watson and other city leaders spoke about the Austin Convention Center's redevelopment during an April 17 groundbreaking event.

(Ben Thompson/Community Impact)

Tom Noonan, president and CEO of the Visit Austin tourism bureau, said adding a new convention center alongside an [expanded airport](#), [light rail system](#) and new [public spaces](#) downtown will maintain the city's place as a "hot tourism destination."

"All of the infrastructure that a destination needs to be really successful, we're building here in Austin. Our competitors have noticed and this is a great shining moment for the

city of Austin," he said.

Mayor Kirk Watson said Austin's boom in population and popularity during the 1990s was similar to trends it's experiencing today, and that a larger facility is now needed to serve people and major events wanting to come to town.

"This is going to be a great connection to our downtown vision," he said. "It's going to be what we need to be doing right now, so it's exciting to be a part of this. It's exciting to be working with a city council that shares that vision and is working together as a team to make sure that it comes true."

The convention center redevelopment will add pedestrian walkways along Second Street and through the campus, reopen Third Street to vehicle traffic, and add new public plazas and commercial spaces.

(Courtesy city of Austin)

One more thing

The project is anticipated to [disrupt](#) the surrounding downtown area over the coming months, especially in its early demolition and excavation stages. Qadri said downtown residents and businesses will be [looped in](#) on construction impacts as work progresses.

"It's going to be important for the city, and also obviously my office ... to communicate both to residents and visitors alike on any road closures, and any discomfort that the area might be facing," he said. "We're going to be having the convention center expansion around the same timeline as we're going to see I-35 expansion, the same timeline we're going to see Project Connect. So it's going to be really important and vital for us to ensure that we're keeping everyone up to date, making sure that no one feels like they're in the dark or that they're falling behind in any way."

The city is planning for traffic impacts around the convention center property downtown.
(Courtesy city of Austin)

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