

How Can We Make Tourism Help Our City the Most?

Tourists bring millions of dollars in tax revenue to our City, and they also have a major impact on City operations and resources, as well as our economy as a whole. How should we best manage the tax dollars generated by tourism to benefit our community? Join us to discuss this timely topic as the Austin City Council considers the budget for the coming year.

Conversations will address these questions:

- In what ways can tourism and tourists help improve your life as an Austinite?
- In what ways could hotel occupancy taxes be spent that would make our city a better place to live, work, and play?
- What are some of the most positive impacts tourists and tourism have on our community?
- What are some of the greatest challenges posed by tourism and tourists?

Why is this topic important and how will feedback be used?

Austin welcomes thousands of tourists each year, and those tourists pump significant amounts of tax dollars directly into City coffers. Those tourists also have a significant impact on City resources. We're trying to determine the right ways to invest tax money contributed by tourists back into the City.

The Visitor Impact Task Force (appointed by the Austin City Council) is currently meeting (through the spring) to discuss how the City of Austin should use hotel occupancy tax funds paid by tourists. The task force will make recommendations to the City Council about how to best utilize all hotel occupancy revenue to impact tourism by May 31, 2017. This feedback could greatly influence their recommendations.

Who will be reviewing the feedback?

- Larry Schooler, Manager of Community Engagement Division, City of Austin
- Visitor Impact Task Force
 - James Russell, Chair
 - MariBen Ramsey, Vice Chair
- Austin City Council

What else do I need to know?

Currently, visitors generate an estimated \$40 million per year in sales and related taxes, and more than \$90 million annually in Hotel Occupancy Taxes which has become the third largest source of tax revenue for the City of Austin. The City of Austin uses Hotel Occupancy Taxes for the Austin Convention Center, Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the Cultural Arts Program. The Visitor Impact Task Force will:

- Study the impact of tourism on City infrastructure, services, and facilities, and investigate opportunities to offset those impacts by using Hotel Occupancy Tax revenues;
- Review current uses of Hotel Occupancy Taxes and the impact of those activities and expenditures on tourism in the City;
- Review current tourist activity in the City of Austin and what events, venues, or facilities those tourists attend while visiting;
- Review State and National best practices for tourism programs;
- Review of Texas Tax Code Chapter 351 and allowable uses of Hotel Occupancy Taxes under the Tax Code including parks, historic preservation, cultural heritage, music, arts, special events, fee waivers, convention, visitors bureau, transportation, downtown districts, venues and other facilities and debt defeasance for city-owned hotels and convention facilities;
- Review the Austin Convention Center expansion, all possible design options and potential funding mechanisms;

Are there other ways to participate?

Other ways to participate will be announced soon