

Palm School Steering Committee Organizational Meeting Summary
May 29, 2025, 1-3pm
700 Lavaca Street, Austin, Texas

Members Present: Andrew Gonzales, Anna Maciel, Efrain Velez, Gilbert Rivera, John Rosato, Linda Quintanilla, Marcos de Leon, Maria Solis, Mercy Okoye, Ted Eubanks, Toña Vasquez

Members Absent: Novert Morales, Peggy Vasquez

County Staff: Bill Wilson, Amy McWhorter, Christy Moffett, Sergio Plaza, Selena Muñoz, Addison Ptomey

The Steering Committee Charge:

The Palm School Steering Committee (the Committee) will be an active partner in the Palm School Concept Plan development process and in efforts leading up to the restoration and reimagining of the Palm School property. Working in partnership with the County’s consultant and staff, the Steering Committee will:

1. Provide input for the design of a community engagement plan that will be used to inform a Concept Plan for the Palm School property
2. Review and offer feedback on processes, plans, and materials created by the consultant leading up to and including the Concept Plan for the Palm School property
3. Review and offer feedback on processes, plans, and materials created by staff and/or consultants related to any restoration and reimagining of the Palm School property
4. Provide a consensus recommendation to the Commissioners Court on the community engagement process used to inform a Concept Plan and the Concept Plan for the Palm School property

Welcome and Introductions

The Steering Committee did introductions of all members. Changes to the Steering Committee included a new representative for the City of Austin, Mercy Okoye, and new member John Rosato representing the Urban Land Institute – Austin (ULI). Additionally, Alan Garcia resigned from the Steering Committee. Travis County staff provided introductions as well.

VOCES Project/Palm School Oral History Project update:

The trailer for the Palm School Oral History Project was shared with the Steering Committee. A proclamation is in the works for Commissioners Court approval on a date yet to be determined. The full collection will be publicly available for everyone to view on the Archive Website once the Commissioners Court approves and makes a formal proclamation and acknowledgment of this work.

Updates Since Last Meeting

Travis County staff provided updates on activities since the last meeting in September 2024. The updates included hiring to fill some key vacancies to assist with the work of the Palm School project, VOCES project, coordinating training with ULI for the Steering Committee, and working through meeting logistics. Key next steps for the Steering Committee involve creating a group charter and building out a community engagement plan.

Organizational Discussion

The Steering Committee established recurring meetings on the second Thursday of each month from 1-3pm. The Steering Committee requested agendas materials sent in advance of the meeting and to have printed materials available at each meeting.

The Steering Committee discussed creating a Group Charter as the first step in progressing toward the goal of engaging with the public to determine the future of Palm School. A group charter serves as a foundational document that clarifies purpose, goals, and operating principles. The charter helps to ensure everyone is on the same page and working towards common objectives. It outlines how the Steering Committee will function, communicate, and make decisions.

Until a group charter is adopted, the Steering Committee agreed to operate under “meeting agreements.” The Meeting Agreements are guidelines for a group of people with the goal of ensuring open, active, inclusive, and respectful dialogue and participation.

Changes to the Steering Committee include new members Mercy Okoye (City of Austin representative) and John Rosato (Urban Land Institute (ULI) representative), and a member resignation: Alan Garcia (community representative).

Requests for future meetings: receive meeting agenda in advance; different meeting space that is more accessible.

Transition to Policy Team

The Travis County staff, Community Engagement team, has led the effort around the selection process and orientation of the Steering Committee. As the Steering Committee

begins to be involved with some of the more technical planning work, the Policy and Planning team will transition to the lead staff role for Travis County.

Next Steps

The Steering Committee discussed the ULI training on Friday June 13th, 2025. The training presents a fictional scenario to provide the opportunity for experience with low stakes and team building. The training will provide opportunities to incorporate fictional public input, balance competing interests, and give-and-take planning decision-making.

The next meetings will be held on:

- June 13, 2025, 9am-3pm – ULI Training
- July 10, 2025, 1-3pm