

NEWS RELEASE

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Contacts: John Harris 713/853-8109 (o) 832/588-8492 (m)
Pete Radowick 713/853-8077 (o) 713/376-0664 (m)

Hotels are Key Component for GRB 2025 Master Plan **Development hinges on best proposals for enhancing convention business**

HOUSTON – An increased number of downtown hotel rooms is the most immediate objective of the George R. Brown Convention Center's newly released 2025 master plan, which calls for an expanded Convention District with more retail and residential development to attract more convention business to Houston.

The most pressing need identified in the 2025 Master Plan, which was issued to the public today, is the addition of at least 2,000 hotel rooms in the area surrounding the downtown convention center.

Houston currently has 2,955 hotel rooms within a 10-minute walk of the George R. Brown, far fewer than most of its competitor cities, the plan notes. Meeting industry officials also have targeted the need for acquiring more downtown attractions and activities and improved facilities at the GRB.

"This year marks the 25th anniversary of the George R. Brown, and we're committed to making our Convention District everything it can be in the years ahead," said Dawn Ullrich, president and CEO of Houston First Corporation, which oversees management of the City of Houston-owned convention center. "Our plans call for soliciting the best ideas from the development community to help us achieve our goal of adding rooms to our Convention District and increase the vibrancy of our convention business."

Houston First has retained consulting firm Strategic Advisory Group to help draft a Request for Qualifications for developers who would propose to build a convention center hotel with at least 1,000 rooms as well as other possible development. The property could be built on a parcel adjacent to the GRB and connect to the convention center via a tunnel or skywalk.

The 2025 Master Plan envisions the eventual expansion of the George R. Brown on its south end, where a parking garage currently sits, and a new garage on the building's north side. The plan also contemplates that a hotel would sit near each of the building's four corners, including the Hilton Americas-Houston, which opened in 2003.

Initial steps of the 2025 Master Plan are already under way with the development of a regional tourism center near the GRB, the redesign of Avenida de las Americas (the boulevard which fronts the GRB), and the forthcoming addition of outdoor dining features at the Hilton-Americas along Crawford Street (see renderings [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#)).

Ullrich said analysis by participating master plan consultants, with feedback from at least 50 industry and community stakeholders, conclude that 2012 is the time to adopt aggressive strategies for development that result in private investment incentives and infrastructure improvements. The Gensler firm compiled the plan.

“We were in agreement that now is the time to take advantage of momentum created by recent projects like Discovery Green, One Park Place, Hess Tower and Metro’s new east-west downtown rail project,” she said. “I think we can leverage this growth to expand the east side of downtown, including the neighborhood east of U.S. 59, and support a long-term vision for the George R. Brown.”

Ullrich noted that parking lots and warehouses mostly occupied the east side of downtown when the convention center opened in 1987.

“The George R. Brown successfully carried out its original master plan, which was developed in the 1980s, and I think that bodes well for future success as the GRB begins its 25th anniversary year,” Ullrich said.

Copies of the 2025 master plan document can be downloaded [here](#).

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About Houston First

Houston First represents the consolidation of the city of Houston Convention & Entertainment Facilities Department and the Houston Convention Center Hotel Corporation. Houston First is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and operation of more than 10 City-owned buildings and plazas, and underground and surface parking for nearly 7,000 vehicles. Facilities include the George R. Brown Convention Center, Wortham Theater Center, Jones Hall, Miller Outdoor Theatre and the Hilton Americas-Houston hotel. For more information, visit www.HoustonFirst.com.

About the George R. Brown Convention Center

Houston’s George R. Brown Convention Center ranks among the 10 largest facilities in the United States with nearly 1.2 million square feet of exhibition, meeting and registration space. The downtown facility celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2012. For more information, visit www.HoustonConventionCtr.com.

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