



Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court

Ramon Garcia
County Judge

Joel Quintanilla
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Hector "Tito" Palacios
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Joseph Palacios
Commissioner, Precinct 4

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COURTHOUSE MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE CONVENES MEMBERS DISCUSS HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS, DISCOVERY ANALYSIS, AND PRELIMINARY PLANS FOR MOVING FORWARD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, November 17, 2011

Edinburg, Texas – At the culmination of the inaugural meeting of the Courthouse Master Plan Committee held in October, members of the 28-member committee were charged with contributing their vision for an ideal courthouse facility that would encompass the current needs and projected growth anticipated in the next ten years, as well as take into consideration all fundamental and desired elements of design, structure and function. A similar task was assigned to the consultants facilitating the development of the master plan; between the first and second meetings, they were to undertake a discovery analysis of each of the affected departments and offices currently housed within the courthouse to determine the current and future spatial requirements.



District Court Judge Aida Salinas Flores, County Judge Ramon Garcia, County Judge's Office and Precinct Representatives, and County Clerk Arturo Guajardo

The appointed members of the Hidalgo County Courthouse Master Plan Committee met for the second time on Monday, November 7, 2011, to review the progress made since the inaugural meeting held in October. The committee itself grew from the original 28 to a total of 30 members, after it was determined that certain critical departments were necessary for inclusion.



Laurie Limbacher gives historical overview

courthouse structures and grounds; any plan developed by the committee should be mindful of the Historical Commission's recommendations.

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Laurie Limbacher, a member of the planning consultant team, gave a historical overview on legislation and statutes governing the preservation and protection of courthouses under state law. Ultimately, the Texas Historical Commission must review and approve any proposed changes made to



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The consultant team discussed the discovery process used to garner information on the current courthouse use of space. The team met with individual departments and offices to determine what the anticipated need in square footage would be to safely and comfortably accommodate current demand and plan for the future. Based on the assessment, the total on-site square footage needed is approximately 244,694 sq. ft., a 133% increase from the current space at the courthouse.

The planning consultant team presented a compilation of visionary ideas submitted by the committee, who named elements such as a campus-like facility, design with extra floors for future use, energy-efficient building, and a design that remained true to the unique culture of our area. Also shared were key values or "pillars," based on committee member feedback, which will help drive the development of the master plan, and included a safe and secure environment, harmonious and open design and space, sensitivity to ecology, effective infrastructure, flexibility in design, durable, and low maintenance cost, among others.

"I am impressed with the dedication and effort that the entire committee is putting forth on this extremely important process," remarked Judge Ramon Garcia. "The committee's participation and input is critical towards the development of a master plan that will serve as a roadmap for the County to follow as it addresses the need for a new courthouse," Garcia continued.

"It is our hope that at the end of this process, we will have a firm foundation upon which to develop a keystone landmark fitting for our County seat, a pillar of excellence that will propel our Hidalgo County community forward and last not 20 years, not 50 years, but to serve us for multiple generations to come," Garcia added.

Towards the end of the meeting, the committee was given an overview of a website that has been set up to maintain all information related to the committee's activities, and is a clearinghouse for all documents and presentations that are shared at the meetings. The public is invited to peruse the documents to remain updated on the committee's progress. [The website can be accessed here >>](#).

The next phase of the master plan process is to continue developing the vision for the courthouse. This phase is scheduled to last through mid-December, approximately six weeks. Subsequent phases will include the refinement of the plan, conceptual cost estimate, implementation approach, and the development of a communications plan. The committee plans to hold a series of public comment forums hosted at each of the four precincts in January 2012. The purpose of these forums will be to introduce the courthouse vision to the community and seek community input and feedback.

The next meeting is scheduled for **11:30 am on Monday, December 12, 2011 at the University of Texas-Pan American International Trade and Technology Building (1201 W. University Drive in Edinburg)**. All media and the public are invited to attend. [For more photos of the meeting, click here >>](#).

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