



Agenda Item Report

Legislative Board:	City Council
Date:	August 4, 2026
Contact:	Lysa Gonzales, Tourism Director
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ITEM TITLE: Presentation on the Tourism and Event Impact Study (Community Relations and Destination Services Director Lysa Gonzalez)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Buda Tourism Strategic Plan provides a long-term framework to guide the City's tourism development, destination marketing, visitor experience, and economic development efforts over the next several years. The plan was developed through stakeholder engagement, market analysis, community input, and collaboration with City staff and tourism industry partners.

Following completion of Cygnet Strategies recommended plan, City staff conducted an implementation workshop to evaluate each recommendation, identify priorities, refine proposed strategies, and develop actionable implementation steps. Staff also incorporated emerging initiatives not originally included in the consultant's recommendations, including sports tourism, tournament recruitment for Buda Championship Park, amphitheater event recruitment, and destination sales initiatives.

The accompanying Implementation Plan organizes recommended projects into prioritized work programs, with estimated timelines, responsible departments, and measurable outcomes, providing a practical roadmap for implementation.

Additionally, the City utilized Cygnet Strategies to conduct a Tourism Impact Study for events in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. The results of that impact study are included with this report to provide more context and clarity for recommendations within the 2026 - 2029 Tourism Strategic Plan.

2. BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Tourism is an important economic driver for the City of Buda, generating hotel occupancy tax (HOT) revenues that support destination marketing, tourism promotion, cultural programming, historic preservation, and tourism-related capital improvements. Visitor spending helps drive spending in retail and service industries, which generate sales tax revenue.

Recognizing continued growth opportunities and evolving visitor trends, the City engaged the tourism consulting firm Cygnet Strategies to prepare a comprehensive Tourism Strategic Plan. The planning process included:

- Community stakeholder interviews
- Tourism industry analysis
- Existing conditions assessment
- Destination strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)
- Review of current tourism programs
- Development of strategic goals and recommended initiatives

The consultant organized recommendations into several strategic focus areas, including visitor experience, destination development, business engagement, marketing, cultural tourism, events, and historic preservation.

After receiving the consultant's final recommendations, City staff completed an implementation workshop to determine how recommendations could realistically be incorporated into City operations. During this process, staff refined recommendations, removed initiatives deemed to have limited value or to duplicate existing efforts, expanded recommendations that required additional operational detail, and identified additional opportunities consistent with current City priorities.

3. ANALYSIS

The Tourism Strategic Plan establishes a long-term vision while the Implementation Plan provides a phased roadmap for execution.

The Buda Tourism Strategic Plan establishes a long-term framework for strengthening Buda as a destination by improving the visitor experience, expanding tourism assets, supporting local businesses, and increasing the economic impact of tourism. The plan is organized around three primary strategic priorities: Visitor Friendly Infrastructure, Product Development, and Storytelling.

Visitor Friendly Infrastructure (V)

The Visitor Friendly Infrastructure section focuses on improving the physical environment to make Buda more welcoming, navigable, and enjoyable for residents and visitors. These recommendations emphasize creating a positive first impression, improving connectivity between attractions, and encouraging visitors to spend more time exploring the community. The plan includes recommendations related to:

- V1 Visitor Services: visitor information, restrooms, and safety and cleanliness
- V2 Downtown Physical Environment: shade, historic preservation guidelines and grant program, safety improvements, and landscaping
- V3 Lodging: short-term rentals, lodging recruitment, and regional partnerships and connections
- V4 Meeting Facilities: convention center, outdoor meeting facilities, meeting amenities
- V5 Third Places: community gathering places and activating existing third spaces

Product Development (P)

Product Development focuses on expanding and enhancing the experiences available to visitors by strengthening existing assets, supporting local businesses, and creating opportunities for visitors to engage with Buda's unique character. The plan recommends initiatives in the following areas:

- P1 Downtown Business Recruitment: temporary micro and pop-up markets and experiential business recruitment
- P2 Trail Development: kiosks, repair stations, and Bicentennial Bike Trail
- P3 Arts & Culture: arts development and interactive public culture
- P4 Customer Service
- P5 Outdoor Recreation: programming, birding, sporting events
- P6 Events: family programming, competitions, signature events, third-party event organizers
- P7 History: audio tours, Antioch Colony

These recommendations are intended to diversify visitor experiences, encourage longer stays, increase visitor spending, and strengthen Buda's tourism offerings through arts, culture, recreation, events, and historic preservation.

Storytelling (S)

The Storytelling section recognizes that successful destinations require more than attractions—they

require a consistent message that communicates the community's identity and encourages visitors to experience what makes Buda unique. The recommendations focus on destination marketing, business engagement, partnerships, and promotion. The plan organizes these recommendations into the following areas:

- S1 Assessment / Short-Term Actions
- S2 Promote Local: Shop small and downtown events, and buy and refer local campaigns
- S3 Visitor Information Distribution: lodging, retailers, and restaurants
- S4 Business Assistance: Guidelines and training, online presence, assistance needs,
- S5 Marketing: annual marketing plan, website, business websites, local recommendations, friends and family, hotel occupancy tax grants, Meta marketing, tradeshow, public presence, and public relations
- S6 Content Development: food stories, messaging, travel planning tools, collaboration,
- S7 Balance: community survey, preservation month

The implementation strategy prioritizes initiatives based on available staffing, available funding, organizational capacity, and anticipated community benefit.

Several implementation priorities reflect projects already underway, including:

- Destination website improvements
- Downtown visitor experience enhancements
- Business engagement initiatives
- Music Friendly Texas programming
- Film Friendly Texas promotion
- Public art expansion
- Historic preservation initiatives

The 2026–2029 Tourism Strategic Plan places greater emphasis on destination marketing and business engagement to complement the City's strong foundation of events and create a more diversified tourism strategy. While the plan recommends expanding efforts in these areas, it recognizes that events remain a defining part of Buda's identity and an important driver of community engagement and tourism. Accordingly, events continue to play a significant role throughout the strategic plan.

Destination Marketing

The plan shifts destination marketing toward storytelling and experience-based promotion by emphasizing:

- Culinary tourism
- Downtown experiences
- Arts and culture
- Outdoor recreation
- Music
- Regional travel
- Historic resources

Business Engagement

Implementation recommendations place greater emphasis on assisting local businesses in becoming tourism-ready through:

- Business workshops
- Digital marketing assistance
- Online presence improvements
- Hospitality training
- Business networking
- Destination partnerships

Additionally, the Tourism Strategic Plan Implementation Plan incorporates emerging opportunities that were not fully addressed in the consultant's recommendations, including sports tourism and amphitheater event recruitment.

Sports Tourism

With the opening of Buda Championship Park, the City has a significant opportunity to diversify tourism through tournament recruitment and sports-related visitation. Recommended implementation initiatives include:

- Tournament recruitment strategy
- Sports sales materials
- Tournament organizer outreach
- Familiarization tours
- Sports tourism marketing
- Visitor information tailored to tournament participants and families

Amphitheater Event Recruitment

The City-owned amphitheater presents an opportunity to expand destination programming by recruiting third-party festivals, concerts, and special events that generate overnight visitation while minimizing operational demands on City staff. Recommended implementation efforts include:

- Event promoter recruitment
- Venue marketing materials
- Entertainment industry outreach
- Event recruitment webpage
- Annual recruitment strategy

Overall, the implementation plan transforms broad strategic recommendations into measurable projects with anticipated timelines, assigned work areas, and performance objectives.

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- Adoption of the Tourism Strategic Plan and accompanying Implementation Plan does not authorize new expenditures.
- Many recommended initiatives will be implemented through existing departmental work programs, annual operating budgets, Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funding, partnerships, grant opportunities, and future budget requests as appropriate.
- It is important to note that estimates within the plan were researched in 2025.
- Individual projects requiring additional funding will be presented to City Council for future consideration through the annual budget process or separate agenda items.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN/GOALS

BALANCED AND INTENTIONAL GROWTH

6. STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

Retain and grow local businesses in Buda; Attract new businesses to Buda aligned with the defined targeted businesses/industries

7. PROS AND CONS

Pros

- Establishes a long-term vision for tourism development.
- Provides a prioritized implementation roadmap.
- Supports responsible use of Hotel Occupancy Tax revenues.
- Aligns tourism initiatives with current City priorities.
- Expands economic impacts opportunities through sports tourism and event recruitment.
- Improves coordination between Tourism, Marketing, Main Street, Arts, and Events.
- Creates measurable implementation goals.
- Provides flexibility to adjust priorities as community needs evolve.

Cons

- Implementation will require sustained staff capacity over multiple years.
- Some initiatives will require future funding or grant opportunities.
- Certain recommendations depend on private-sector participation and partnerships.
- Economic conditions may affect implementation timelines.

8. ALTERNATIVES

City Council may consider the following options:

1. Adopt the 2026–2029 Tourism Strategic Plan in its entirety as presented.
2. Adopt portions of the 2026–2029 Tourism Strategic Plan and provide direction to staff regarding recommendations or initiatives Council wishes to prioritize, modify, or defer.
3. Direct staff to incorporate additional initiatives or revisions into the 2026–2029 Tourism Strategic Plan prior to adoption, including opportunities identified through the implementation workshop or other Council priorities.

9. REQUESTED ACTION / SUGGESTED MOTION / RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Buda City Council adopt the 2026-2029 Tourism Strategic Plan as presented.

Attachments:

[Tourism Strategic Plan_Documents.pdf](#)
[Presentation - Tourism Strategic Plan 2026 - 2029.pdf](#)