



# Austin Music Commission

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City Hall, 301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Austin, TX 78701  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/musiccomm>

August 19, 2013

Mayor and City Council  
City of Austin  
301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> St.  
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Mayor Leffingwell, Mayor Pro Tem Cole and Council Members:

In 2008, citizen stakeholders in Austin first recommended that the City designate several blocks of Red River as Austin's premier "live music district."

This recommendation was reinforced by subsequent and robust stakeholder groups working on urban planning issues in Downtown Austin. In 2009, the CreateAustin Cultural Master Plan directed City leaders to encourage and explore the development of cultural districts and to promote these districts and activities as part of the mix of cultural tourism amenities and destinations

In 2010, the Waller Creek District Master Plan was more specific. It read, in part:

*"The nationally-renowned cutting-edge live music scene on Red River plays a major role in incubating and developing young local artists and creates substantial economic opportunities for the City, local businesses, and local artists. The Red River live music [scene] should be protected and strategies developed for retaining these venues...Waller Creek is not only Austin's opportunity to create a highly unique creek corridor and trail system, but incentivizing it as a home to Austin's creative community will help to give this emerging district an authentic Austin flavor, and it will make a strong statement to both residents and visitors about the importance of the creative community in our city. ...In addition, as the WCDMP moves into implementation, city staff should work with stakeholders, including the Austin Music Commission, to refine, enhance, and implement their strategies and consider additional avenues to maintain the ecosystem of music-related businesses on Red River."*

The Downtown Austin Plan (2011) called preserving the Red River Live Music District an "urban design priority," while the Imagine Austin Plan (2012) directed city leaders to "develop and implement strategies to create and sustain the live music industry," and to "explore and re-imagine existing City development tools...with a focus on creative industries' facility needs" including music venues.

Therefore, in 2012, the Music Commission put forward a resolution to Council asking that this section of Red River be declared a Live Music Heritage District. Despite the above foundation for support of this designation, no action was taken by Council.

Over the last five years, our City has grown exponentially, as have the economic pressures on small business owners – like the venue owners on Red River.

Also over the last five years, the cultural tourism dollars generated by Austin’s live music industry have steadily increased – to \$1.6 billion annually, at last tally – and the City and its citizens have indisputably benefitted.

In these five years, there is still no live music district, or a district designation of any kind, for these four blocks on Red River. We strongly urge you to create the Red River Cultural District (RRCDC) (in keeping with the terminology established by the Texas Commission on the Arts) that specifically:

- Designates the street-facing parcels of the 600-900 blocks of Red River Street as the Red River Cultural District
- Positions the RRCDC as the implementation of citizen and stakeholder recommendations as detailed in the CreateAustin Cultural Master Plan, the Waller Creek District Master Plan, the Downtown Austin Plan, and the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.
- Defines the RRCDC as a marketing tool for small business owners to increase local and visitor traffic to their venues and restaurants.
- Defines the RRCDC as a marketing tool for hospitality and other businesses to direct locals and visitors to a vibrant and unique area of our city.
- Ensures that all in-district parking meters have a five-hour maximum
- Fast-tracks any and all in-district requests for Musician Only loading/unloading zones.

Based on these parameters, the impact on the City budget should be zero (though the City may see modest additional parking revenue from the meter change.

The Music Commission will be setting meetings with each of you to discuss this issue.

We thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

Brad Spies, Chair  
Joah Spearman, Vice Chair