

City of Austin

Music and Creative Ecosystem Stabilization and Promotion

INTRODUCTION and CONSIDERATIONS

In response to growing challenges experienced by musicians, creatives and their associated industries, the Austin City Council passed Resolution No. 20160303-019 directing the City Manager to develop a plan of action to address a variety of priorities, goals and objectives. City staff have thoroughly reviewed the items included in the Resolution, met with various stakeholders and reviewed feedback from public hearings held by the Arts and Music Commissions. The following document is a list of strategies and recommendations to address the four key focus areas identified through this research.

While some of the recommendations listed below can be implemented with existing resources at the City staff level, a number of items can only be enacted through City Council action, both via policy development or revision, and in many cases additional funding. Many recommendations will require significant stakeholder participation and support if they are to be implemented, as the City of Austin may not be in the best position or have the expertise to execute them effectively. Strategic public/private partnerships, philanthropic activity, government action, and most importantly, support from the music and creative communities will all be critical factors in the successful implementation of these recommendations.

Another important considerations include the urgency of implementation, the variety of implementation timeframes and estimated costs associated with these recommendations. As we move forward in this process, we will further explore and define necessary resources, partners, and roles and responsibilities of traditional and non-traditional stakeholders.

KEY FOCUS AREA (1): ADDRESS AFFORDABILITY ISSUES RESULTING IN DISPLACEMENT OF MUSICIANS, CREATIVES, AND ASSOCIATED PLACES OF BUSINESS

Strategies	Recommendations
1.1 Preserving existing and increase the stock of affordable creative space	1.1.1 – Promote the establishment of multiple music and creative industry hubs through public/private partnerships to boost local industry capabilities
	1.1.2 – Commission a small business, music and creatives real estate gap analysis
	1.1.3 – Hire a consultant to coordinate a program to activate nontraditional spaces that support a variety of private and nonprofit creative uses
	1.1.4 – Encourage use of appropriate affordable space for creatives in interlocal agreements
	1.1.5 – Evaluate the creation of a technology platform to match available real estate with community creative and music needs
	1.1.6 – Coordinate with the Convention Center to ensure creative space is incorporated within any future Convention Center expansion plans
	1.1.7 – Coordinate with the appropriate entities so that previously voter-approved bond projects associated with art and creative space are implemented
	1.1.8 – Develop a consistent framework for identification and cultivation of cultural districts, including internal and external stakeholder participation and appropriate incentives for community partnerships
	1.1.9 – Encourage the private sector to create a “strike fund” that can assist in facilitating affordable housing and creative space
	1.1.10 – Evaluate partnerships with other governmental entities with available real estate that might serve creative purposes
	1.1.11 – Explore the inclusion of support for creative spaces within future bond referenda
1.2 Preserve existing and increase the stock of affordable housing	1.2.1 – Encourage and collaborate with Neighborhood Housing & Community Development (NHCD) to explore affordable housing options for creatives and musicians

KEY FOCUS AREA (2): IDENTIFY AND ALIGN CITY OF AUSTIN REGULATIONS, OPERATIONS, AND INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE THE MUSIC AND CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS

Strategies	Recommendations
2.1 Ensure planning and land use regulations protect and promote the music and creative ecosystems	2.1.1 – Promote compatibility between performance venues and area residents by employing the Agent of Change Principle
	2.1.2 – Reduce regulatory, zoning and administrative barriers to the development of live/work spaces
	2.1.3 – Develop and implement a density bonus program for preservation or new development of live music venues and creative spaces in vertical mixed-use (VMU) and transit-oriented development (TOD) zones, and other master zoned areas
	2.1.4 – Position appropriate surplus City-owned property for redevelopment into creative space through public/private partnerships
	2.1.5 – Work with Capital Metro to expand services to creative and entertainment districts
	2.1.6 – Align City infrastructure improvements associated with mobility to promote access and connectivity to creative activities
	2.1.7 – Allow for more creative uses by-right in Imagine Austin Activity Centers, Activity Corridors, and Transition Zones through CodeNEXT or a prior development code amendment
	2.1.8 – Allow compatible, public-facing creative use and music spaces to satisfy the ground-floor retail requirement in vertical mixed-use (VMU) through a code amendment
	2.1.9 – Evaluate creative spaces and live music venues within planned unit developments (PUD)
	2.1.10 – Explore feasible options to promote public art components within private developments
2.2 Align licensing and permitting processes to better serve music and creative businesses	2.2.1 – Review the permitting and regulatory processes associated with music and creative commercial activity, identifying and implementing systems that promote customer service, efficiency, and consistency
	2.2.2 – Explore the development of an entertainment license to organize and consolidate permits associated with business operation
	2.2.3 – Evaluate the impact of flexibility within building codes to encourage the development of new and preservation of existing creative use spaces and live music venues, that would not impact public health and safety
2.3 Ensure Economic Development Department and other City resources are organized to best promote the creative and music ecosystems	2.3.1 – Continue the North American Music Cities Best Practice Summit as a method by which to gather research on new and innovative solutions
	2.3.2 – Establish and implement processes and structures that facilitate collaboration between all department divisions to address needs of the creative ecosystem
	2.3.3 – Expand the current Business Retention & Enhancement Program (BRE) to include the Red River Cultural District
	2.3.4 – Explore the need and feasibility for establishment of a loan program for creative businesses and individuals, including those potentially displaced by new development
	2.3.5 – Work with the appropriate City departments to incorporate arts, creative, cultural and historic assets into existing and future wayfinding systems
	2.3.6 – Modify the scope of the Music Venue Assistance Loan Program to expand beyond sound mitigation improvements
	2.3.7 – Use property and sales tax abatements, Chapter 380 agreements, development fee waivers, tax increment financing, and other policy tools allowed under state statute to incentivize creative and music sector businesses and organizations, both for retention and new development
	2.3.8 – Define and integrate creative space preservation, music, and art into small area plans, including neighborhood plans, corridor plans and Soul-y Austin commercial area plans
	2.3.9 – Provide ombudsman services for creative businesses
	2.3.10 – Coordinate and maximize the use of City partnership spaces, including but not limited to the City libraries, the Carver, the Mexican American Cultural Center, the Asian American Cultural Center and the ZACH Theatre for creative uses through artist and musician activations and bookings

KEY FOCUS AREA (3): PROMOTE THE INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS, ALONG WITH THE MUSIC AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Strategies	Recommendations
3.1 Increase revenues generated by artists, musicians, and related businesses	3.1.1 – Create an educational campaign prompting local music patron etiquette, including tipping of musicians and the importance of cover charges
	3.1.2 – Create a Live Music Venue Best Practice guide
	3.1.3 – Create a revenue development curriculum for musicians and creatives
3.2 Foster professional development	3.2.1 – Develop a continuum of business development training seminars designed to service creative business and nonprofit organizations of various sizes and at various stages of development
	3.2.2 – Develop creative industry specific training within Getting Connected and a creative business expo to serve various creative industry subsectors
	3.2.3 – Identify and promote legal assistance resources available to creatives and musicians
	3.2.4 – Promote BizRight video training to better educate creative businesses on City permitting processes
3.3 Foster audience development	3.3.1 – Create an export program for Austin musicians
	3.3.2 – Explore the feasibility of establishing a program to promote the licensing of Austin music for commercial uses
	3.3.3 – Explore the feasibility of establishing an Austin-only music online radio station
	3.3.4 – Establish an Austin Music Walk of Fame in place of the Austin Music Memorial
	3.3.5 – Create a foreign and domestic cultural exchange program with creatives via Sister City/International Association of Science Parks (IASP) relationship and national creative arts organizations
	3.3.6 – Explore the feasibility of implementing the Cultural Tourism Plan recommendations
	3.3.7 – Develop an education campaign to promote patronage of local musicians and creatives
3.4 Promote the development of the music and creative industry	3.4.1 – Implement a structure to promote continued coordination with the Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) for implementation of the Tourism and Marketing Plan
	3.4.2 – Partner with the Texas Music Office to update the Austin entries within the Music Industry Database
	3.4.3 – Identify the unique needs of specific genres and execute strategies focused on promoting underserved genres
	3.4.4 – Include creative business development as a component of the Multi-Ethnic Chamber Alliance (MECA) Chamber contracts
	3.4.5 – Evaluate web tools for promotion and networking of, and among local creatives
	3.4.6 – Expand the promotion of local art and music via area hotel concierges and linkages with ACVB
	3.4.7 – Explore the development of city-wide arts award, i.e. similar to Small Business Award
	3.4.8 – Encourage the recruitment of national creative and music association conferences
	3.4.9 – Establish nonprofit foundation(s) to enable creative and music industry development specific philanthropy
	3.4.10 – Develop a mentoring program for artist (similar to Creatives Meet Business)

KEY FOCUS AREA (4): DEVELOP AND PROMOTE A CONTINUUM OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR AUSTIN MUSICIANS AND CREATIVES

Strategies	Recommendations
4.1 Increase access to educational resources	4.1.1 – Market existing workforce development training opportunities outside of creative industries
	4.1.2 – Facilitate partnerships with higher education institutions for the development of training and certificate programs in music and creative industry subsectors
4.2 Promote creative learning among Austin youth	4.2.1 – Expand existing Music for Kids program to include Musica Para Niño’s, concerts for Spanish speaking children
	4.2.2 – Explore expanding the Creative Learning Initiative to other school districts within the City of Austin geographic boundary via additional funding for MindPop
	4.2.3 – Research the interest and feasibility of create an internship program for youth in Austin to learn about the various sectors of the music and creative industry through internships with non-profit organizations and private businesses
	4.2.4 – Promote youth leadership through musical collaboration via cultural exchanges
	4.2.5 – Connect schools and families with nearby Parks and Recreation Department facilities and other cultural centers to provide after-school arts programming through the Creative Learning Initiative
	4.2.6 – Fund local arts and music organizations and/or individuals to serve students through the Creative Learning Initiative
	4.2.7 – Coordinate with SXSW for potential expansion of the High School Badge Program
	4.2.8 – Hire a Creative Learning Initiative liaison within the City of Austin to coordinate arts programming and linkages to the community
	4.2.9 – Promote high school marching bands events and work to incorporate music industry training workshop when appropriate
	4.2.10 – Promote events that expose and educate area youth on careers in creative industries
4.3 Promote access to existing safety net social service resources	4.3.1 – Increase awareness of health and human services available for musicians by the creation of a Public Service Announcement campaign through a partnership with Health Alliance for Austin Musicians (HAAM) and The SIMS Foundation
	4.3.2 – Create a health services coordinator with the Health and Human Services Department
	4.3.3 – Promote the 2-1-1 resource help line among musicians and creatives
	4.3.4 – Explore partnerships between nonprofit organizations and health service providers to address gaps in health care coverage for creatives and musicians