



Austin Music Venue Preservation EDI Overlay

Background

In passing several music and arts resolutions in the last six years, the City of Austin committed itself to being at the forefront of a national conversation about how music, arts and cultural organizations can and should reflect and embrace diversity in all the ways it is experienced and understood, in all communities across the city.

In a follow-up report to the Omnibus Resolution that was passed by city council on March 3, 2016, the Mayor's working group recommended the integration of arts, music and culture and equity, diversity, and inclusion in all policies, and as a core value across departments and operations. The Mayor's working group noted the following:

Despite great efforts to foster inclusion and diversity in City benefitted programming, we find that equity, diversity, and inclusion remains under emphasized in the arts/music/culture arena. The first set of Music and Creative Ecosystem Stabilization Recommendations from the June 2016 staff Omnibus report have limited mention of equity, diversity, and inclusion in their set of recommendations. We found difficulty in truly representing Austin's diversity in the composition of our working groups. Moving forward, in these recommendations it is crucial that we approach implementation through an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens, applying a critical equity filter upon each recommendation prior to implementation. Further, we urge the City of Austin to adopt equity, diversity, and inclusion in all policies and as a core value across departments and operations along with music, arts, and culture. The initiation of these changes should include a timeline with metrics and goals that support the integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion as described by 2021.

The challenges for a commercial music industry in Austin that is a portrait of inequality, in a city known as the most economically segregated in the U.S., are myriad.

- Communities of color, each facing unique barriers to opportunity, are underrepresented in the Austin music economy.
- The historical lack of representation of people of color in Austin music and systemic inequities inhibits participation, creating less access and a lack of ownership, professional networks and mentorship, audience and genre development, physical spaces and platforms to explore.
- The white dominant culture in Austin music has historically undervalued people of color and has blocked career pathways in live music, from performance to talent buying to event promoting.

The last Austin Music Census showed that small percentages of minorities participate in the music venue economy. Austin has historically marginalized minority music communities

(including “genres” such as urban, hip hop, and Latin music). Changing demographics bear out the necessity to have a more inclusive music economy.

The Mayor’s Office collaborated on a launch of a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization to ensure that all the benefits and opportunities provided by music are available and accessible to all residents. EQ Austin was founded to stimulate cultural representation and foster economic prosperity in the music and creative sector through an equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) lens.

EQ Austin has facilitated strategic initiatives since 2015 on music equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) with a private sector coalition including the City of Austin, City Council, Economic Development Department, Parks and Recreation Department, Equity Office, Music and Arts Commissions, Quality of Life Commissions and Multi-Ethnic Chambers of Commerce. Our goals:

- To ensure that the City of Austin’s programs are equitably funding businesses and community assets in a way that addresses historic systemic inequities with attention to business ownership, employment, audience and/or genre.
- To accelerate a more equitable music industry through recommendations including an increase in participation of communities of color in Austin’s music industry through education and training.

Recommendations for EDI in Austin Music Venues

Minority Business/Venue Ownership Workshops:

1. A series of professional development workshops to be conducted with the aim of increasing music stakeholders of color’s access and opportunities as music business owners, including venue ownership.
2. Curriculum created and administered in collaboration with the Equity Office, Economic Development Department, Small and Minority Business Resources Department, Economic Development Department, the Greater Austin, Hispanic, LGBT, Asian and Black Chambers of Commerce, Huston-Tillotson University, Austin Community College, the University of Texas at Austin and minority owned or operated music nonprofit organizations, with a focus on entrepreneurship, business plans, budgeting, insurance, and strategies to manage growth.
3. This initiative coupled with a private sector engagement strategy will help promote access to capital/investors and technical support for increasing venue ownership and organizational leadership.

Live Sound/Audio Engineering Workshops:

4. A series of professional development workshops to provide training in technical skills, live sound and audio engineering. Curriculum created and administered in collaboration with the Equity Office, the Economic Development Department, Huston-Tillotson University, Austin Community College, the University of Texas at Austin and minority owned or operated music nonprofit organizations.

Music Venue Internships:

5. To increase racial equity venues will provide career training opportunities through paid internships open to high school and undergraduate students to expose them to the possibilities of working in the music venue economy.

Venue Staff Development:

6. Venues receiving City support will hold staff equity training as outlined by the Equity Office and the Economic Development Department, including equity in hiring, institutional racism and implicit bias.

Audience/Consumer Development:

7. Create a marketing strategy with the Music Venue Alliance, Red River Cultural District, the Equity Office, the Economic Development Department, and minority owned or operated music nonprofit organizations to increase communities of color patronage of local artists and live music venues. The target demographic for this nightlife initiative is the age 21 to mid-30s market segment. This tech-savvy demographic is what drives the live music economy.
8. Austin's music venues can encourage audience development with: 1) Creation of a bilingual (English/Spanish) website that becomes the Austin music community calendar, promoting artists of color with links to venues/artists, allowing consumers to buy tickets, merchandise or go to artist websites. 2) Implement an online digital tipping initiative that allows audience to deposit a tip for any Austin artist. 3) Create distributed music program to promote Austin music played in businesses. 4) Create PSA's and a social/electronic/print media campaign to encourage patronage of live music venues throughout the city.

Genre Development Venue Residencies:

9. Austin has historically marginalized minority music communities (often tied to "genres"), and communities of color culture and heritage (urban, hip hop, Latino music genres, etc.). Select venues will curate weekly shows featuring emerging artists of color. From a talent roster of hundreds, venues will coordinate a marketing campaign with local electronic and print media to stimulate positive career traction.

Genre Development Town Halls:

10. Austin has historically marginalized minority music communities city-wide (often tied to "genres"), including their culture, heritage and music genres including urban, hip hop, and Latin music. In 2015, the Austin Music Commission Genre Development Working Group held meetings and district tours in the 10 City Council districts to directly engage communities of color. The Town Halls had as their focus the topic of "genre development" and underserved communities in the music industry. The Commission recommend a strategy to increase cooperation and transparency within the music industry using streamed Town Hall meetings recorded at music venues in each district.

Continuing the Town Halls will open direct dialogue with ethnic minority music stakeholders and secure data with the objective of increasing audiences of color at music venues and opportunities for sustainable careers in the industry.

Music Exporting:

11. This initiative will provide artists of color an opportunity to further their careers in more genre-friendly music cities. While Austin builds towards a more equitable music industry, an export exchange program with strong BIPOC markets will see Austin artists on new stages immediately playing to more ethnically diverse audiences. In the 2015 Austin Music Census, none the top five genres of music that respondents claimed was “rock,” “Americana,” “alternative,” “folk/acoustic,” and “pop rock.” The West Coast and Northern Mexico offer different environments for contemporary Black and Latin musicians.
12. Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle and Monterrey, Mexico consumer markets will provide opportunities for Austin musicians and independently owned Austin music companies. EQ has developed relationships with these municipalities and City Departments (including Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs), arts and cultural commissions and music industry leaders to explore music exporting.
13. Austin venues will collaborate with these West Coast music cities and Northern Mexico to create showcase exchanges in these markets for Austin musicians, helping build new BIPOC entrepreneurs, jobs and economic growth in the creative sector.

Talent Buying and Co-production:

14. Venues will collaborate with local BIPOC owned talent buyers/promoters to create showcases and cross promote acts from underrepresented genres. Venues will address geographic ethnic demographic patterns with a focus on specifically marketing to more diverse audiences, with unique revenue activities, and access to capital.

Supporting Act Opening Sets:

15. Venue talent buyers will work to secure opening act slots for local emerging artists of color. The performance duration and pay scale will vary, with the potential for BIPOC artists to grow their base. Industry standards may present challenges as many tours are packages without room for local talent slots.

Destination Events:

16. Austin currently has a lack of destination festivals of color, thus venues can take up the slack until the festival economy becomes more inclusive. We are exploring projects aligned with EDI goal of Texas Performing Arts, The Long Center, Waterloo Greenway and other performance spaces. In conjunction with annual events like Free Week, Hot Summer Nights and Austin Music Month, venues in the Red River Cultural District, E. 11th Street and throughout the city will work to create events that highlight and promote the artistic diversity in Austin. Venues will also focus on ethnic cultural holidays/annuals like Dia De Los Muertos, Holi and Texas Relays Weekend.

Cultural Asset Mapping Project (CAMP) and City-wide Venue Development:

17. CAMP was conducted by the Economic Development Department to assess where cultural and creative spaces exist within the ten districts in the city with the overall purpose of shaping the city's understanding of the creative ecosystem. The data showed that White people are overrepresented in the creative economy. The report also shows that Hispanic or Latinx people face the largest disparities in comparison with other races and ethnicities. The Equity Office and the Economic Development Department, with minority owned or operated music nonprofit organizations will be consulted to promote live music across city districts and research future venue location and sustainability.

Music Portal for Venue Promotion and Income Support:

18. Based on the Mayor's 2016 music priorities summary, working with the Economic Development Department and Visit Austin, venues can help develop a portal/website that becomes the Austin music community calendar, linking venues/artists to consumers, increasing merchandise sales, tickets and artist website engagement, creating a music marketplace.
19. The portal also creates a distribution music program to promote Austin music played in businesses and serves as an important aspect of genre development, increasing Austin's artists of color brand on an international stage.

Music Hubs/Venues:

20. EQ Austin has collaborated on three music hub proposals in response to the Austin Creative Space Bond Project. A Black Music Hub located in the African American Cultural Heritage District; Latin Music Hub at the Emma S. Barrientos-Mexican American Cultural Center, and an Asian Music Hub at the Asian American Resource Center.
21. The first goal of the Austin Music Commission during Mayor Steve Adler's first administration in 2015 was to accelerate a more equitable music industry. With industry access being the central issue for people of color in Austin music, in February 2016, we introduced the Austin Music & Creative Ecosystem Omnibus Resolution. An EDD Staff response appeared in June 2016, first introducing music EDI into the conversation. In the Music and Creative Ecosystem Stabilization Recommendations put forward in June 2016, Recommendation 1.1.1 called for "promoting the establishment of multiple music and creative industry hubs through public-private partnerships to boost local industry capabilities and identifies ways to fund the public sector investment through the passage of bonds and tax incentives." Venue stakeholders will support the Music Hubs to create synergy critical to genre/artist development, minority business ownership, with co-working space, meeting rooms, resources and tools.
22. Clusters will bring tangible benefits, such as increased efficiency of connections and operations, better access and speed to "insider" information, and a high-energy environment of both competitive and cooperative relationships – all of which can create faster time to market with more opportunities to build relationships and revenue. The hubs will act as the most efficient way to build bridges between stakeholders in an industry that has historically been splintered along ethnic lines. A central, foundational

leadership structure can also emerge from the hubs, ensuring an inclusive, diverse vision and a sustainable industry.