

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN AND WALLER CREEK DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING LIVE MUSIC

Various elements of the Downtown Austin Plan (DAP) and Waller Creek District Master Plan (WCDMP) include recommendations that may bolster the interests of the live music community in and around Downtown. A brief overview of these are provided below and the full documents may be found on the City's website (www.cityofaustin.org - downtown portal or www.wallercreekplan.org)

1. Strategies and Policies to Sustain and Enhance Austin's Creative Culture

This draft report, part of the DAP, outlines both Downtown-wide strategies, as well as District-specific strategies to promote live music and other creative industries in Downtown.

Recommendations include:

- define an official Entertainment District area as envisioned by the Live Music Task Force;
- provide incentives for live music venues throughout the proposed Entertainment District and define criteria to receive such incentives;
- reduce permit fees;
- reduce utility costs;
- provide free musician parking;
- increase EGRSO and/or other technical assistance to musicians by providing a single point of entry (similar to Seattle's music venue assistance program);
- provide publicity on City's website and promotional materials;
- consider establishing a City-owned, high-caliber music venue to anchor the 6th Street Entertainment District.
- consider various funding sources (for example, a TIF or TIRZ) whose revenues could be invested to realize the Downtown creative community strategies;
- increase funding for the Business Retention and Enhancement Fund;
- explore the establishment of a Cultural Mitigation Fee which could be applied to redeveloping properties within the existing Waller Creek Tunnel Project TIF area to support the relocation and/or retention of live music venues, as well as support other creative community initiatives.

2. Downtown Density Bonus Program

The draft Downtown Density Bonus Program identifies the construction of space suitable to accommodate live music or public-oriented cultural use space as one way in which projects can receive additional entitlements through the density bonus program. If such space is guaranteed within a proposed development, then the development may build an additional two square feet for each square foot provided within the live music or cultural use.

3. Downtown Affordable Housing Strategy

Among many other recommendations, the draft plan recommends that the City "make housing available to: ...a range of lifestyles, including Downtown workers and those active in the creative community. In addition the report highlights the economic impact of the creative community or cultural sector who are critical to the vibrancy of Austin in general and Downtown in particular (p. 21), and who are critical to encourage if we are to keep our reputation as one of the top Creative Class cities in America.

4. Parks and Open Space Master Plan

This draft plan recommends that busking be allowed on streets and public parks and open spaces, and calls for most Downtown parks to be more intensively programmed in terms of

music and theater performances and artistic interventions of all kinds, including outdoor art classrooms.

5. **Downtown Core/Waterfront District Plan** (The first draft of the district plan will be posted on the City's website soon.) This draft district plan gives high priority to the complete makeover of East 6th Street, from IH 35 to Brazos Street as Austin's signature live music and entertainment district.

6th Street is known throughout the country and the world, but the experience of being on 6th Street does not live up to its reputation. Current uses are predominately bars. The sidewalks are in deteriorating condition, and their narrow width makes it impossible to accommodate the high volume of pedestrians on weekend nights. As a result, the street must be closed to traffic, negatively impacting local businesses, encouraging unruly behavior and inhibiting the goal of creating a more diverse day and nighttime experience.

The District Plan calls for public investment in the pedestrian environment, a more focused effort on business recruitment and façade improvements to promote a diverse mix of retail and restaurant offerings along the street and reestablish 6th Street as a viable visitor destination. This initiative is the top priority of the Sixth Austin Business Improvement District (BID).

The overall Downtown Austin Plan, once completed will call for the following more specific actions, as part of its Implementation Strategy chapter:

- **Construct East 6th Streetscape, from Brazos to IH 35** with widened sidewalks and café zones, street furnishings, street trees, banners, public art, district signage and way-finding.
- **Bolster the Sixth Austin BID by funding a full-time assistant director and/or increasing funding for the executive director position.** The role of this position would be to: further recruitment efforts to diversify businesses, increase cultural uses, focus on live music performance venues, and extend daytime hours of operation; work with property and business owners to improve management and operations of bars; promote local historic district designation as a means of attracting incentives, funding for façade improvements, increasing heritage tourism, etc.

6. Waller Creek District Master Plan

The WCDMP identifies the opportunity to promote artist-oriented affordable housing, live-work units, galleries, performance spaces, etc., throughout the District, as redevelopment occurs, especially in areas where building heights are limited by Capitol View Corridors. More specifically, the plan states: "The nationally-renowned, cutting-edge live music scene on Red River should be protected, if possible, and incentives developed for subsidizing the relocation of these venues to East Sixth Street, should they be displaced by redeveloping Waller Creek District properties." - a recommendation which echoes the DAP report "Strategies and Policies to Sustain and Enhance Austin's Creative Culture" discussed above.