

RESOLUTION NO. 20170608-033

WHEREAS, in 2013 City Council designated the 600 to 900 blocks of Red River as the Red River Cultural District; and

WHEREAS, on March 3, 2016, Council passed the Music and Creative Ecosystem Omnibus Resolution No. 20160303-019, which affirmed support for the music and creative ecosystem through short- and long-term goals specific to cultural tourism, revenue development, and venue retention; and

WHEREAS, during the process to approve the Visit Austin 2016-2017 marketing plan and budget, Council directed the City Manager to explore using hotel/motel tax revenue to support necessary enhancements and other elements of the Red River Cultural District; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Downtown Commission Alley Activation Workgroup published the 2013 “Activating Austin’s Downtown Alleys as Public Spaces” report, which analyzed Austin’s Downtown alleys, explored opportunities and challenges associated with activating Downtown alleys, and researched international best practices for creating and implementing alley activation plans; and

WHEREAS, the report’s “Logistics of Activating Alleys” section states that “Austin’s [D]owntown alleys typically have poor lighting, making it difficult to create a stronger sense of safety in these spaces”; and

WHEREAS, the current space and configuration of the alley between 7th and 8th Street that opens onto Waller Creek has created an environment conducive to crime and illicit activity within the Red River Cultural District; and

WHEREAS, upcoming place-making efforts in collaboration with the Soul-y Austin Program and the Red River Merchants Association will continue to enhance and improve the Red River Cultural District for visitors and Austinites alike; and

WHEREAS, certain infrastructure issues must be addressed to ensure that these future efforts will have a positive, measurable economic impact in the District; and

WHEREAS, the Red River Merchants Association and the Austin Police Department have concluded that additional light infrastructure within the alley would help create a more criminally defensible public space; and

WHEREAS, the lights would need to be installed on private property; and

WHEREAS, typically the costs of installing and maintaining such infrastructure would be borne by individual property owners; and

WHEREAS, the Economic Development Department has identified funding for the lighting but needs Council approval to implement the project on private property; and

WHEREAS, stakeholders and others have also identified sufficient trash and recycling receptacles as another immediate infrastructure need; and

WHEREAS, an uneven double sidewalk along the Northwest corner of Red River and 7th Street is a design challenge that has created challenges for pedestrian access and some believe may encourage loitering and criminal activity; and

WHEREAS, the Economic Development Department has funded a professional survey of the alley between 7th and 8th Streets and is exploring whether closing a portion of the alley will create greater security in the area. This survey is estimated to be completed in July 2017; and

WHEREAS, the survey results will help inform Economic Development Department, Austin Transportation Department, Public Works Department, the Austin Police Department, and other involved city departments about the potential closure of the alley where it leads to Waller Creek; and

WHEREAS, Economic Development and the Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel plan to brief City Council in the near future on a comprehensive set of proposed strategies for the preservation of the Red River Cultural District; and

WHEREAS, the specific projects discussed in this resolution align with the goals of the collective group of strategies, but require more immediate attention for reasons of urgent public safety and public health; and

WHEREAS, the Economic Development Department budget has appropriated money for the survey of the alley and has funds available for the possible installation of trash cans and planter boxes; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL:

The City Manager is directed to return with an ordinance waiving the fees associated with permitting additional light infrastructure in the alley between 7th and 8th Streets.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to determine if the City could contract with a qualified electrician from its rotation list for installation of lights on private property and report back to Council within 45 days about whether this mechanism is feasible or whether alternatives, such as rebates, may be available to private parties.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Council directs the City Manager to consider in her report options for City assistance with long-term lighting maintenance costs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to recommend potential short- and long-term design solutions that could improve the sidewalks in this area to increase pedestrian mobility and safety and to ensure that the sidewalks meet the Americans with Disability Act requirements. The recommendations should include consideration of the following options:

- Coordinating with the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH), Economic Development Department, and the City departments that oversee public Right of Way to successfully redesign this area;
- Eliminating the double sidewalk through strategies that may include temporary placement of planters;
- Exploring long-term solutions for design and construction of the sidewalk improvements through potential funding sources such as the Downtown Public Improvement District, parking meter revenue, sidewalk priority funding, Vision Zero, the Great Streets program, and partnerships with private parties and associations that could maintain this area for the benefit of the community and businesses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to explore the potential of enhancing the district as a destination through a temporary installation and maintenance of art along the wall adjacent to the double sidewalk through an artist secured and funded by the Red River Merchants Association.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to encourage the Austin Transportation Department to collaborate with the Economic Development Department and stakeholders in exploring a possible installation and maintenance of public art in the right-of-way and a creative crosswalk installation at the corner of Red River and 7th Street that would rely on sustainable, low-maintenance materials.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to encourage Public Works and applicable City departments to collaborate with the Economic Development Department in considering whether installing and maintaining planters in approved right of way locations would further enhance the Red River Cultural District for Austin residents, visitors, and patrons of the area businesses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The Council affirms the need to improve sanitary conditions in the Red River Cultural District as a priority. The City Manager is directed to return to Council with an update on a plan for improving trash collection and recycling within the Red River Cultural

District within 60 days. This plan could include coordination with organizations such as the Downtown Austin Alliance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

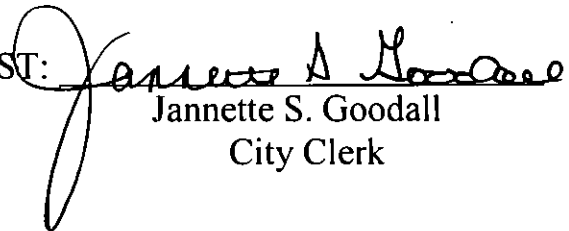
The City Manager is directed to compose a memorandum for Council summarizing the survey findings and providing an update on staff's progress on the initiatives described in this resolution within 60 days.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to explore the use of Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue for signage and wayfinding in the Red River Cultural District and to include recommendations for any other appropriate use of HOT funds for enhancements in the Red River Cultural District as part of the proposed Fiscal Year 2018 budget.

ADOPTED: June 8, 2017

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk