




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Rebecca Giello, Interim Director  
Economic Development Department (EDD) 

**DATE:** July 31, 2019

**SUBJECT:** Response to Resolution No. 20190523-029 regarding Fifth Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor Cultural District Designation

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As part of the Palm District Master Plan Resolution (No. 20190523-029), Council directed the City Manager “return to Council by August 1, 2019, with an action to initiate the process for a cultural district designation of the Corridor, the timeline for completing the designation and identifying other actions that will amplify the stories and contributions of the Mexican American community within that corridor and its immediate surroundings.”

The recommended course of action is for EDD to complete best practice research on district guidelines and criteria that can be solidified for local and state designation of a cultural district. The background and consideration for this recommendation is detailed in the attachment.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

xc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
City Manager’s Executive Team

## FIFTH STREET MEXICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CORRIDOR CULTURAL DISTRICT DESIGNATION

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### Cultural District Designations, Application Process, Recommendations, and Timeline

**Local and State Cultural District Designations:** There are two types of designation that can be pursued, one being local and one through the Texas Commission on the Arts. Below are descriptions and recommendations for each designation.

- **City of Austin Cultural District Designation:** The Austin City Council has previously approved the designation of two cultural districts. The African American Cultural Arts District/African American Cultural Heritage District (Six Square) was established through Resolution No. 20071213-058, and the Red River Cultural District was established through Resolution No. 20131017-036.
  - **Recommendation:** EDD recommends completing best practice research on district guidelines and criteria that can be solidified for local designation of a cultural district and other district types. EDD will provide a best practice report to return to City Council October 30, 2019.
- **Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) Designation:** The TCA designates cultural districts in cities across Texas. TCA designated cultural districts are special zones that harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and commercial revitalization.
  - **Application Process:** One application per organization is required for the designation program. The TCA requires a letter of intent to TCA by January 30 and a completed application by June 15. Unfortunately, the 2019 TCA deadline has passed.
  - **Recommendation:** EDD will conduct further analysis of the application requirements, including governance structure, established membership, and leadership qualifications required to manage a TCA cultural district. EDD will conduct outreach locally to identify a partnering entity who possesses the capacity and leadership to apply for this designation and fulfill the responsibilities for this designation.
- **Additional District Opportunity through Souly Austin:** The EDD Souly Austin Program is a place-based economic development program focused on creating and retaining strong, vibrant, culturally rich and diverse neighborhood business districts throughout Austin. Through Souly Austin, business owners receive a flexible set of tools to assist in the formation of merchants' associations.
  - **Application Process:** Merchants associations are required to establish a board of directors and a set of bylaws for their business district to apply to the Souly Austin Program.
  - **Recommendation:** The Souly Austin Program will conduct a competitive call for applications for the formation of new merchants' associations or business districts in September and October. Interested business owners and entities representing the Fifth Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor will be encouraged to apply to the Souly Austin Program.
  - **Notation:** On the August 22, 2019 City Council agenda, there will be an agenda item to approve a contract to support the Souly Austin Program and resources for district development. EDD will only be able to onboard new Souly Austin districts through approval of this contract.