

RESOLUTION NO. 20210127-055

WHEREAS, Austin's vibrant Downtown is filled with art, history, culture, music, food, and entertainment, and this cultural fabric is a contributing part of the community's international acclaim; and

WHEREAS, Downtown Austin is one of the few spaces where one can enjoy live music, cultural venues, history, great restaurants, local retail shops, and performing arts all in the same place; and

WHEREAS, the global pandemic has threatened the survival of many of our cultural institutions, live music venues, local retail shops, and restaurants and has thus, threatened our community's economic prosperity and resilience; and

WHEREAS, the vibrant life of Downtown is an expression of Austin's creative culture and distinctive placemaking; and

WHEREAS, Council has approved many resolutions in recent years aimed at improving the Downtown experience, including Resolution No. 20190619-186 to enhance connectivity and pedestrian safety in the Historic Rainey Street District and Resolution No. 20200611-051, which led to the establishment of protected bike lanes on Congress Avenue to provide safe passage to multi-modal users in the Downtown area; and

WHEREAS, these and other efforts have enhanced Austinites' appreciation for the Downtown urban environment and enabled them to more easily access the myriad of activities, businesses, recreational squares, and other civic spaces in Downtown Austin; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation has executed multiple projects over the past several months to support Downtown businesses, including the Council-created “Shop the Block” program in the 600 block of Congress Avenue, a month-long Holiday Stroll celebration that featured local musicians playing on street corners, and a holiday passport to encourage shopping and dining at Downtown businesses; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation is forming a team of passionate Downtown visionaries to initiate activations that support retailers, restaurants, creative artists, and entertainment venues in a COVID-safe manner; and

WHEREAS, in partnership with the Ann Richards Legacy Project, the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation has hired artists, photographers, and writers to create banners that honor Austinites and inspire hope; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation has raised \$6,000 to continue a street performer program; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation will raise \$10,000 and the Downtown Austin Alliance has committed \$20,000 if the City of Austin contributes \$30,000 for an expanded program through Spring 2021; and

WHEREAS, in hiring local musicians whose performance opportunities have been restricted during the pandemic, the Foundation’s program will also enliven the public realm and create a more engaging and supportive environment for Downtown businesses; and

WHEREAS, the Foundation plans to partner with community organizations to fill vacant commercial spaces and street-level voids with pop-up art installations

and galleries and to create unexpected, COVID-safe Downtown experiences and explorations that will provide much needed resources directly to local businesses, artists and musicians; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation is committed to supporting equity, inclusion, diversity, and innovation in Downtown and commits that at least 51% of all City funds would support artists and organizations of color; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has a vested interest in the revitalizing of Downtown; and

WHEREAS, City of Austin assets such as parking, streets, sidewalks, and open spaces could be leveraged to support Downtown businesses during the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, successful efforts Downtown could be replicated in other areas of Austin where the pandemic has also threatened our rich cultural assets and legacy businesses; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council affirms that the City supports and will collaborate with the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation to create and help fund immediate interventions that create positive change and help reactivate Downtown.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to identify City staff who can participate immediately in such an effort, with an emphasis on forming an innovative and solution-oriented team.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to identify money and resources available to support creative interventions that help reactivate Downtown. Potential funding sources should include any allocations for existing programs halted during the pandemic; busking program resources within the Music Office, funding within the Cultural Affairs Division for temporary art installations, and available funding within the Transportation Department through the Smart Mobility Program transit adventures, for example.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

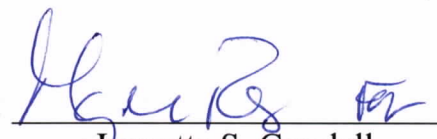
The City Manager is directed to bring forward an ordinance waiving up to \$6,000 in fees for the first phase of the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation banner installation along 12 lampposts along the Congress Bridge during the month of March 2021.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to report back to Council no later than February 4, 2021, with financial options for supporting this effort. The City Manager is directed to report back to Council on the broader implementation recommendations from the leadership team and partners by March 1, 2021.

ADOPTED: January 27, 2021

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk