

1 **RESOLUTION NO.**

2 **WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated Austin’s local economy
3 for nearly 18 months, leading to the permanent closure of dozens of local restaurants,
4 shops, and music venues; and

5 **WHEREAS**, the Downtown Austin Alliance determined that of 740 storefronts
6 open in the pre-pandemic time period, 88 have closed permanently, with an uncertain
7 future for an additional 96 businesses; and

8 **WHEREAS**, of those closures, more than 55 are local restaurants and 10 are live
9 music venues; and

10 **WHEREAS**, federal relief combined with City of Austin funds have assisted
11 many small businesses that include music venues, retail shops, and restaurants; and

12 **WHEREAS**, Council initiated innovative methods to assist businesses over the
13 past 18 months; and

14 **WHEREAS**, one such innovation was the Shop The Block pilot program that
15 allows businesses to extend their operations outdoors to promote a safe and vibrant
16 shopping and dining experience; and

17 **WHEREAS**, 34 shops and restaurants are benefitting from Shop The Block, with
18 some permits encompassing several businesses along the length of a city block; and

19 **WHEREAS**, customer survey data on the Shop the Block program indicated that
20 100% of respondents would be interested in continuing the program past the COVID-

21 19 pandemic; and

22 **WHEREAS**, Development Services Department staff recommended
23 improvements to the program to Council over the past year based on the feedback
24 gained from the surveys; and

25 **WHEREAS**, with Austin's economy on the rise again, lessons learned from
26 innovative strategies should be built into City programs going forward to continue the
27 momentum of recovery; and

28 **WHEREAS**, Shop The Block demonstrates an innovation that strikes a healthy
29 balance between ease of permitting and appropriate government oversight to maintain
30 public safety; and

31 **WHEREAS**, as a pilot program, Shop The Block is scheduled to expire on
32 December 1, 2021 with renewals possible to continue use of the program by applicants
33 only partially into 2022; and

34 **WHEREAS**, the City offers permanent programs that offer similar services as
35 Shop The Block, but all existing programs present a variety of barriers to access
36 including a complex review and approval systems combined with multiple fees; and

37 **WHEREAS**, the City offers a central application process through the Austin
38 Center for Events (ACE) that allows event organizers to apply for special event permits
39 that involves multiple City departments; and

40 **WHEREAS**, the application process used by ACE may also be an example for

41 other application processes that involve more than one City department and require
42 similar levels of review; and

43 **WHEREAS**, it is the desire of this Council to see Shop The Block continue as a
44 paradigm to more permanently innovate and improve existing programs; **NOW**,
45 **THEREFORE**,

46 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN**

47 The City Council directs the City Manager to prepare one or more ordinances that
48 accomplish, to the extent feasible, the following objectives:

- 49 1. synchronize the uses allowed to participate in the Sidewalk Café program
50 established in City Code Chapter 14-4 (*Sidewalk Cafes*) with the uses
51 allowed to participate in the Shop The Block pilot program; and
- 52 2. create a program, similar to the Sidewalk Café program, that allows private
53 parking lots to be used, temporarily, for uses described in Ordinance No.
54 20200604-047.

55 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

56 The City Council directs the City Manager to explore options, including
57 placemaking or design assistance, that will increase participation in the City's street
58 patio program; and to provide Council with a memorandum identifying the options
59 considered and recommendations.

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61 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

62 The City Council encourages the City Manager to implement an application
63 system that allows an applicant to apply for one or more of the programs described in
64 this Resolution using one application.

65 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

66 The City Council further directs the City Manager to return to Council with the
67 ordinances and changes to the fee schedule, if necessary, no later than December 9,
68 2021. If the City Manager encounters challenges with preparing ordinances that
69 accomplish the objectives listed above, the City Council directs the City Manager to
70 communicate the challenges before September 30, 2021, so that Council can provide
71 additional direction to the City Manager.

72 **ADOPTED:** _____, 2021

ATTEST: _____

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Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk