

ACTIVATION AWARD

Souly Austin supports the vision of a Merchants Association by providing seed funding for organizational development and district projects. The Souly Austin Activation Award is a small grant provided to the business district upon formation of the business district’s merchants association. The award provides direct resources to support the district in building upon the economic vibrancy and sustainability of the district.

Award Goals Include:

- Support district development activities
- Provide initial seed funds for association formation/activities
- Nurture cohesive, collaborative, consensus amongst association
- Develop project management capacity
- Support projects/activities in District Economic Strategy

Project Description

The Red River Cultural District (RRCD) Merchants Association Activation Award was awarded in September 2016 and expended on a variety of projects.

Hot Summer Nights, an event that is FREE and open to the public, from July 13-16th 2017 at participating venues, restaurants and entities in the District. Hot Summer Nights, was an idea driven from the stakeholders in the district and is geared at boosting pedestrian traffic in the area and revenue for businesses during the “dog days” of summer where temps hit 100 degrees and business slows. Hot Summer Nights provides an opportunity for patrons to come out and experience the Cultural District not only through music but through pop-ups, engaging local artists, and other activations. The event is free, providing access to music and cultural activities for all. Highlights of Hot Summer Nights include:

- The Red River Merchants Association developed partnerships and secured over \$60,000 in sponsorships to assist in programming and supporting local musicians and industry support and supporting craft and food vendors and developing collaborations which were made possible due to the formation of a merchant’s association.
- HOPE Farmers Market and food vendors in the Amphitheater of Stubbs providing a night market feel, selling fresh local vegetables, with crafts, and local music also on the stage.
- Exploded Records held a pop-up record shop at CB’s Stubbs throughout the weekend; records for sale and local artist



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record features; additional pop-ups by local businesses and craft makers.

- Eastside Pop-Up hosted an artisan and vintage market throughout the district including Mohawk and Cheer Up Charlies, and Empire Control Room.
- German Texan Heritage Society, one of the most historic and culturally significant venues in Austin hosted a beer garden featuring polka music and food by Frank, a small business in Austin.
- Pelons Restaurant hosted food and beverage specials, an artist who painted live throughout the day and retail vendors. A private investment by the business included the launch of their new Taco mural.
- Activations at Swan Dive, Empire Control Room, and Barracuda with pop-up vendors including Create Culture, Batch Austin.

Additional funding supported the development of new graphic logos for the District influenced by business and owner input through the District Strategy process. The logo development led to the creation of district identity signage, with 85% of projects costs being invested from private contributions through business owners.

These projects support major goals of Souly Austin, the Economic Development Department, and the City of Austin, including revenue generation for small, local businesses, promoting compact and connected districts, supporting Austin-based artists and creative professionals, promoting pedestrian-oriented and multimodal forms of transportation, and preservation and stabilization of culture and music venues.



Metrics
Number of District Businesses Engaged - 20
Number of Partners - 10+
Number of Creative Artists Engaged - 100+
Media/News Hits - 17,666,828 media impressions
Dollars Leveraged - \$60,000+



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District Strategy Alignment:

- **Economic Growth, Strategy 3.1.** Attract diverse complementary businesses and creatives to the district such as artists, performers, vintage shops, record shops and restaurants through collective pop-up events to assist in the day time and night time activation.
- **Music, Culture, and Arts, Strategy 2.2.** Work with existing festivals and create new District-focused events and festivals to feature local artists.
- **Music, Culture, and Arts, Strategy 2.3.** Support public art and installations by local artists that further distinguish the identity of the District.
- **Music, Culture, and Arts, Strategy 3.1.** Explore partnerships with larger venues to accommodate more attendees for free shows.

Challenges:

- Delays in project selection due to consensus building
- Ensuring equity amongst district stakeholders
- Substantial time and resource commitments for executing projects

Successes:

- Leveraging of private contributions
- Establishment of recurring live music event
- Creating opportunity for collaborations among merchants