

# Cultural Currents Request for Proposals

Exploring the artistic and musical heritage of  
the Red River Cultural District



RED RIVER  
CULTURAL DISTRICT  
UNITED THROUGH MUSIC

DOWN  
AUSTIN TOWN  
ALLIANCE

# Cultural Currents: Request for Qualifications

*Exploring the artistic and musical heritage of the Red River Cultural District*

## PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Red River Cultural District and The Downtown Austin Alliance request proposals from qualified consultants to document and showcase the Red River District's history, music, and artistic traditions. The project should include due diligence on the early history of the area including cultural history inclusive of the German immigrant history and black entrepreneurship, with the focus and depth of the project dedicated to the years of history of Red River as a center for music.

This scope is considered a "year one" effort for a multi-year project aimed at capturing the narrative history of the district during a time of significant change. Deliverables from this effort will be leveraged in a variety of ways to ensure the preservation of the Cultural District's assets and history.

## PROJECT GOALS

Document and showcase the district's history, music, and artistic traditions and deliver assets to the Cultural District to:

- Aid in marketing Red River as a Cultural Heritage tourist destination and attracting visitors locally, nationally, and internationally
- Amplify the Red River Cultural District as destination for music, cultural and commerce - past, present and future
- Ensure the preservation of local stories, songs, and artistic expressions for future generations
- Strengthen the district's sense of identity by curating and telling the stories of its artists, musicians, and historical figures
- Highlight the contributions of diverse cultures, communities, and artists who shaped the district's identity
- Leverage in attracting funding to support the RRCD's ongoing work

## SCOPE OF WORK

1. **Structure:** A project outline should be developed that considers a structure for the project to advance beyond this specific scope. Special attention should be paid to outlining a committee or advisory structure that will manage the work going forward.
2. **Engagement:** Work should begin with 3-5 focus workshop sessions with identified stakeholders to guide the interpretive and research themes, sub-themes and overall direction of the project. Subsequent engagement should include one-on-one interviews with individuals identified for follow up to offer more in-depth information and research

guidance. Summarized engagement findings should include identified themes and subthemes and how they relate to the Site Inventory deliverable, described below.

3. *Resource Development*: An annotated site map should be prepared that documents the site name, address, description, and business history, with accompanying photographic, anecdotal, and written history that documents the cultural and musical history of the site.
4. *Storytelling and place-based activation*: At least one place-based activation or storytelling deliverable should be completed based on the documented information. This could include an advocacy campaign, exhibition, walking tour, or performance in collaboration with partners in the Red River Cultural District; narrative content for each property applicable for website and print uses; or several short-form videos with interview footage, narration, photos or video imagery to be used for promotional and storytelling purposes for the Cultural District.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

- Five or more years of dedicated experience
- Cultural Tourism Plan or Project experience
- Stakeholder engagement and facilitation experience
- Trained, qualified and accredited Interpretive planners
- Consultant team must include at least one Austin-based individual with local knowledge, and professional experience as outlined above

## **SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

- List / description of planning and implementation projects developed in the past 2 years
- Team qualifications
- Three references from recent projects
- Narrative approach to the stated scope of work
- Detailed draft budget
- Detailed draft timeline
- Any applicable terms and conditions

## **HOW TO SUBMIT**

- Submissions should be sent to [hello@downtownaustin.com](mailto:hello@downtownaustin.com) by December 30<sup>th</sup>, 5:00pm

## **PROCESS OVERVIEW**

- November 25, 2024: Request for Qualifications / Proposal launch

- Early December: Information and Q&A session
- January: Review and Interviews with selected firms will be conducted.
- Anticipated project kick-off of February 1st, 2025.
- \*\* Dates subject to change

# APPENDIX

## Appendix A. Preliminary Properties List for Site Map & Inventory

*\*Additional Sites may be added\**

900 Red River	715 Red River
912 Red River	609 E 7th St
801 Red River	611 Red River
802 Red River	615 Red River
705 Red River	617 Red River
709 Red River	603 Red River
711 Red River	606 E 7th St
710 Red River	611 E 7th St
714 Red River	515 E 6th St
720 Red River	

## Appendix B. District and Research Boundaries

Red River Cultural District boundaries: 4th Street to the South; 15th Street to the North, Interstate I-35 to the East as well as Neches but as far as Trinity to the West.

## Appendix C. Cultural District Background

The Red River Cultural District (RRCD) is a world-wide cultural tourism destination for authentic live music, food, and drink experiences in the heart of downtown Austin, Texas. After receiving city cultural district designation in 2013 from the City of Austin, in 2015 the district partnered with the city to create the Red River Merchants' Association, a coalition of over forty local small businesses in the district – including not only live music venues, food, hospitality, lodgings, lifestyle & entertainment businesses, but also the First Baptist Church, the German-Texan Heritage Society & Waterloo Greenway.

During the creation of the Cultural District engagement efforts exceeded 90% involvement and participation from the community stakeholders in the district boundaries. The mission, vision and goals of the organization were developed at the grassroots level with the community. It is important to note the District stakeholders came together in a call to action. As Austin continues to grow, our cultural assets and opportunities for the creative and music industries and its visitors remain at risk due to rising property taxes, increased commercial rent and housing costs, and new development causing displacement. The organization continues to dedicate significant time and effort to engaging on local policy and program initiatives that may impact the District. The organization has taken a strong stance on finding ways to promote its cultural significance such as



Hot Summer Nights, summer music festival to ensure preservation and also evolution of the Cultural District. Today the organization continues to prioritize programming that will bring visitors, pedestrian traffic, events, conventions, and more people to the Cultural District to share the cultural assets and experiences it has to offer. Board members and staff serve on downtown stakeholder committees, boards and working groups of Caritas Austin Resource Center for the Homeless, Downtown Austin Alliance, Waterloo Greenway, the Music Commission, Music Makes Austin and the National Independent Venue Association.

Today the uniqueness of the District is the concentration of over a dozen iconic music venues contributing to cultural tourism and the strong music heritage of Texas. With Moody Center to the far north of the Cultural District boundaries, the area stretches and provides a full “Music Mile” with over 100 years of cultural heritage, arts and music history in Austin.

## Appendix D. Area History

*Commissioned by Red River Cultural District; authored by Michael Corcoran*

1839 - Red River Street was at the eastern edge of Austin when the street plan was laid out by Edwin Waller, Austin’s first mayor, in 1839. It became a main north-south thoroughfare because Red River is the only street north of Pecan (Sixth) Street and east of Congress Ave. that wasn’t uphill.

The diverse neighborhood was nicknamed Germantown after the colony of immigrants who settled around 10th and Red River in the mid-1800s, with the German Free School and Aloes Wulz Grocery anchoring the community. Ida Pecht, the daughter of German immigrants, grew up on Red River between Hickory (8th St.) and Ash (9th St.) She married Andrew Zilker in 1888 and bore him four children. The family had planned to build a mansion on Barton Springs, but after Ida died in 1916, a distraught Zilker donated the land to the city as a park.

1920s- Red River was home to wagon yards before automobile businesses like Raven’s Garage (605 Red River) opened in the 1920s.

1940s-Sam Lung, whose Cantonese father moved to Texas in the 1890s to work building railroads, opened Austin’s first Chinese restaurant at 1128 Red River in 1946. The menu of Lung’s Chinese Kitchen gave instructions on how to use chopsticks, as Austin’s ethnic/exotic food scene was born.

1950-1960-1970-1980 - For most of the ‘50s, ‘60s and ‘70s, the strip was dominated by used furniture stores and junk shops with names like Williams Do-Rite Swap Shop, Fairyland Antiques, Dutch Meyer’s Trading Post, Red River Rats, Hurt’s Hunting Grounds and J.B. Branton. Most of those buildings are nightclubs today. Snooper’s Paradise, the inspiration of Doug Sahm’s Austin anthem “Groover’s Paradise,” at 705 Red River was later the location of country-western clubs, gay bars, hip hop clubs and rock bars. As the Cave Club, the location introduced industrial music to Texas in the ‘80s. It’s been home to Elysium since 2001.

Although Red River began to be known as Austin's live music district in the '90s, with Emo's and Stubb's leading the way for the Mohawk, Beerland, Club DeVille, Room 710 and others, this strip was where the earliest Austin hippies went before the Vulcan and the Armadillo opened. Red River gave birth to psychedelic rock in 1966, when the 13thFloor Elevators debuted their first single "You're Gonna Miss Me" at the New Orleans Club. Janis Joplin sang just steps away at the 11th Door that same year. Those nascent Austin clubs were where Symphony Square is today.

Red River had an edge, but the flow was inclusion. During the era of segregation, black-owned businesses were next door to white-owned ones on Red River from Sixth to 15th Streets. This was as close to the East Side, both spiritually and physically, as you could get in downtown Austin.

1990s- The Red River walk has always had a bit of an outlaw swagger. In the early '90s, the BYOB Cavity Club installed a half-pipe for skateboarders. Miss Laura of the Blue Flamingo turned her drag bar into a punk club, with the action spilling out onto the street. At 900 Red River, Chances was that rare lesbian bar that booked indie rock bands, like 16 Deluxe, Glass Eye and Sincola- a wild hybrid that brought different cultures together. That open clientele policy continues at Cheer-Up Charlies in the same former car lot office location.

Red River was where you could buy a stack of Playboys as a teenager and nobody would ask for an ID. Each shop had its own personality. Donald's Used Furniture used to keep a 500-lb bale of cotton in the store. Dutch "the Mayor of Red River" Meyer proudly displayed a gruesome framed photo showing Mussolini just minutes after he was killed.

The 1915 Waller Creek Flood washed away a whole block of houses on E. 7th St., but that's nothing compared to the early '70s wrecking balls that wiped away all of Red River from 10th St. to 19th St. (MLK today) as part of the Brackenridge Urban Renewal Project. Many of the displaced businesses were black-owned, causing detractors to term the project "urban removal."

Simon Sidle, a son of freed slaves, helped establish Red River as "antique row" when he opened his first shop in 1917 at 807 Red River. That block, currently the site of Stubb's, had housed a shop by dressmaker Marguerite Skillings in the late 1800s, with master shoemaker Martias Lohmuller setting up a couple doors down. The distinctive rockwork was done years later by Chester Burratti's Mexican crew, many of whom camped on Waller Creek where Stubb's outdoor stage is. When namesake Chris "Stubb" Stubblefield saw the homeless encampment behind his new BBQ joint in '96, he declared it to be Hell's Half Acre, "which makes it right for us."

Perhaps no business exemplifies the maverick spirit of the long, flat street than the One Knite, Austin's most notorious dive bar. Opened in 1970, the O.K. corralled the local blues scene long before Clifford Antone opened his namesake club on Sixth Street in 1975. The Vaughan brothers, Marcia Ball, Jimmie Gilmore and many more got their starts at the One Knite. W.C. Clark quit his job in Joe Tex's band and started a group with Angela Strehli when he experienced the One Knite scene. It was all about the blues, as one British band of note found out in 1971. Pink Floyd had just played

a show at the Municipal Auditorium and the members wanted to unwind with a jam session. The music drew them to the One Knite, but when they said they didn't know any Jimmy Reed or Freddie King, they were turned away from the stage and sulked in the dark side of the room. The Armadillo World Headquarters, which also opened in 1970, was getting all the press, but the scruffy One Knite, where Banditos bikers sat next to LBJ's Secret Service, was where the Austin club scene, the one that lives on today, was being born.