



## **DOWNTOWN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20131120-010**

Date: November 20, 2013

Subject: Report from the Downtown Alleys Working Group

Motioned By: Commissioner Mandy Dealey

Seconded By: Commissioner Martin Barrera

### **Recommendation**

Encourage Council support of the policy recommendations as written in the report.

### **Description of Recommendation to Council**

Policy recommendations in the report are:

- Amend the Downtown Austin Plan to add the following policy goal: With support of the surrounding businesses, establish a program for renovating and enhancing downtown alleys to serve as lively pedestrian walkways, new spaces for artists and small businesses, and vibrant gathering spaces.
- As part of the Downtown Alley Master Plan under development, adopt and implement a comprehensive ten-year strategy to revitalize five to ten of Austin's downtown alleys as vibrant, activated public spaces.
- Through the Public Works Department and in collaboration with downtown stakeholders, develop a template for design standards to facilitate the installation of physical improvements in alleys across downtown to enhance safety and create more pedestrian oriented experiences, such as better lighting, special paving, and seating.
- In partnership with the surrounding businesses, the Downtown Austin Alliance, the Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association, and other stakeholders, select one to two alleys as "catalyst" projects for permanent activation in the next two years.
- While preserving the role of alleys for trash pick-up, create a program to remove and consolidate trash dumpsters located in alleys downtown and, over time, to change the appearance of the remaining dumpsters to make them more attractive.
- Ensure that the unique historical features and facades of alleys are incorporated into the City's historic preservation programs for downtown.
- Adopt a process for naming Austin's downtown alleys and creating street signs at the entrances of the alleys.
- For new development, adopt design standards or guidelines for new development along alleys.
- Include funding in the next transportation bond initiative for improvements to alleys and the creation and implementation of the downtown alley master.
- Develop a plan for how city staff could support temporary and permanent alley activation projects.
- Evaluate the new changes to the City's special events permit process to ensure that they facilitate the ability of organizations to host special alley activation events.

- Create an alley event handbook to highlight how to navigate the city permitting process and put on an alley activation event.

**Rationale:**

The policies and practices will support the activation of Austin's downtown alleys.

**Vote: 11-0**

For: Martin Barrera, Mandy Dealey, Jude Galligan, Dale Glover, Joel Sher, Myron Smith, Lindsey Sokol, Owen Snell, Bart Whatley, Heather Way, Bruce Willenzik

Against: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Dan Leary, Rich MacKinnon, Sunshine Mathon

Attest: Michael Knox

*Michael R. Knox*

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# Activating Austin's Downtown Alleys as Public Spaces

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A Report by the City of Austin Downtown Commission  
Alley Activation Workgroup  
November 4, 2013

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Adopted by the City of Austin Downtown Commission on November 20, 2013, on an 11-0 vote.

## I. Introduction

Today, Austin’s downtown area suffers from a critical lack of developed vibrant public spaces. As a city known for its festivals, live music, and dynamic civic life, Austin in fact has few permanent physical resources to support this identity within downtown.

Traditionally seen as utilitarian corridors, Austin’s downtown alleys have long been overlooked for their potential to help fill Austin’s need for activated public spaces downtown. With alleys conceived of as spaces suited only for cars, trash, and deliveries, the city has not planned a role for alleys to serve as vibrant urban spaces, as alleys do in other cities across the United States and abroad. The general perception of alleys as “eyesores” that are unsafe and unclean has reinforced the lack of popular and political support needed to maximize their potential as open space resources.

To add to this issue is the ever-mounting pressure in Austin to create super-block developments. In the past 15 years, the City Council has vacated and sold off its easement rights for at least 10 downtown alleys to developers. In one of the most recent examples, in 2010, the Council approved vacating the alley in block 18 just east of Congress for the development of the new Marriott hotel. In 2013, a developer submitted a request for the vacation of an alley in the Rainey Street district, for one of the longest remaining alley corridors in downtown Austin.

With more than 100 blocks of alleys still remaining in downtown—more than half a million square feet of public space—Austin’s alleys offer a tremendous opportunity to help fill Austin’s need for more vibrant public spaces downtown. Other cities around the world have been embracing alleys for the special role they play in providing engaging and intimate public spaces, enhancing the pedestrian experience, supporting small businesses and the arts, providing areas that serve as a respite to busy streets, and attracting people into underutilized areas of downtown. Residents and tourists alike flock to alleys in places like San Francisco, Melbourne, and Seville for the unique opportunities these charming spaces offer as places to visit, relax, shop, play, and explore.

In Fall 2012, the City of Austin Downtown Commission created a workgroup to examine opportunities for activating Austin’s downtown alleys in order to contribute to a more vibrant network of people-oriented public spaces in Downtown Austin. The workgroup, which grew over the course of the project, consisted of representatives from the Downtown Commission, the City of Austin, a range of downtown and citywide institutions, individual artists and community activists.<sup>i</sup> This Report summarizes the workgroup’s findings and policy recommendations. It should be noted that the findings presented within the report do not necessarily represent the position held by the specific organizations that took part in the workgroup.

## II. Brief History of Austin's Downtown Alleys

Austin's current downtown alley network goes back to the Waller Plan of 1839, which laid out Austin's downtown street grid and set out a comprehensive network of alleys throughout downtown, with one alley per block (typically 20 feet wide), with only a few exceptions, such as the four blocks with public squares.<sup>ii</sup> As the current Downtown Austin Plan notes, this grid and open space pattern has formed the "DNA" of the city:

Waller's street pattern laid out in the 1839 City Plan contributes significantly to the form and character of Downtown Austin. The orthogonal grid of streets allow for walkable blocks (measuring 276 feet in each direction), with alleys that contribute to the fine-grained urban fabric.<sup>iii</sup>

Starting in the 1960s, private development plans focused on the creation of super blocks and recommended the vacation of alleys to accommodate the large-scale redevelopment. In the following decades, the Austin City Council authorized the vacation of many alleys, destroying the connectivity between alleys set out in the Waller Plan and creating "dead ends" in the city's alley network.<sup>iv</sup> Over one-third of the alleys from the Waller Plan grid in the heart of the Central Business District (at least 23 alleys), have been vacated and redeveloped for other uses.<sup>v</sup>

In the midst of these redevelopment pressures, in 1971 an architect named David Graeber proposed repurposing the alley behind 6<sup>th</sup> Street from the Driskill Hotel to Waller Creek. He submitted a petition to City Council to rename the alley as "Serendipity Alley" and transform it into a year-round social center and major economic stimulant lined with "cafes, boutiques, business offices and unusual shops."<sup>vi</sup> The plan was never adopted, although that alley remains intact.

The current plan for downtown, the Downtown Austin Plan, which was adopted by the City Council in 2011, envisions preserving the historic grid system, by calling for city actions to "maintain, extend and restore Downtown's grid system of streets and alleys."<sup>vii</sup> The Plan specifically calls for a ban on vacating and abandoning alleys except in special circumstances.<sup>viii</sup>

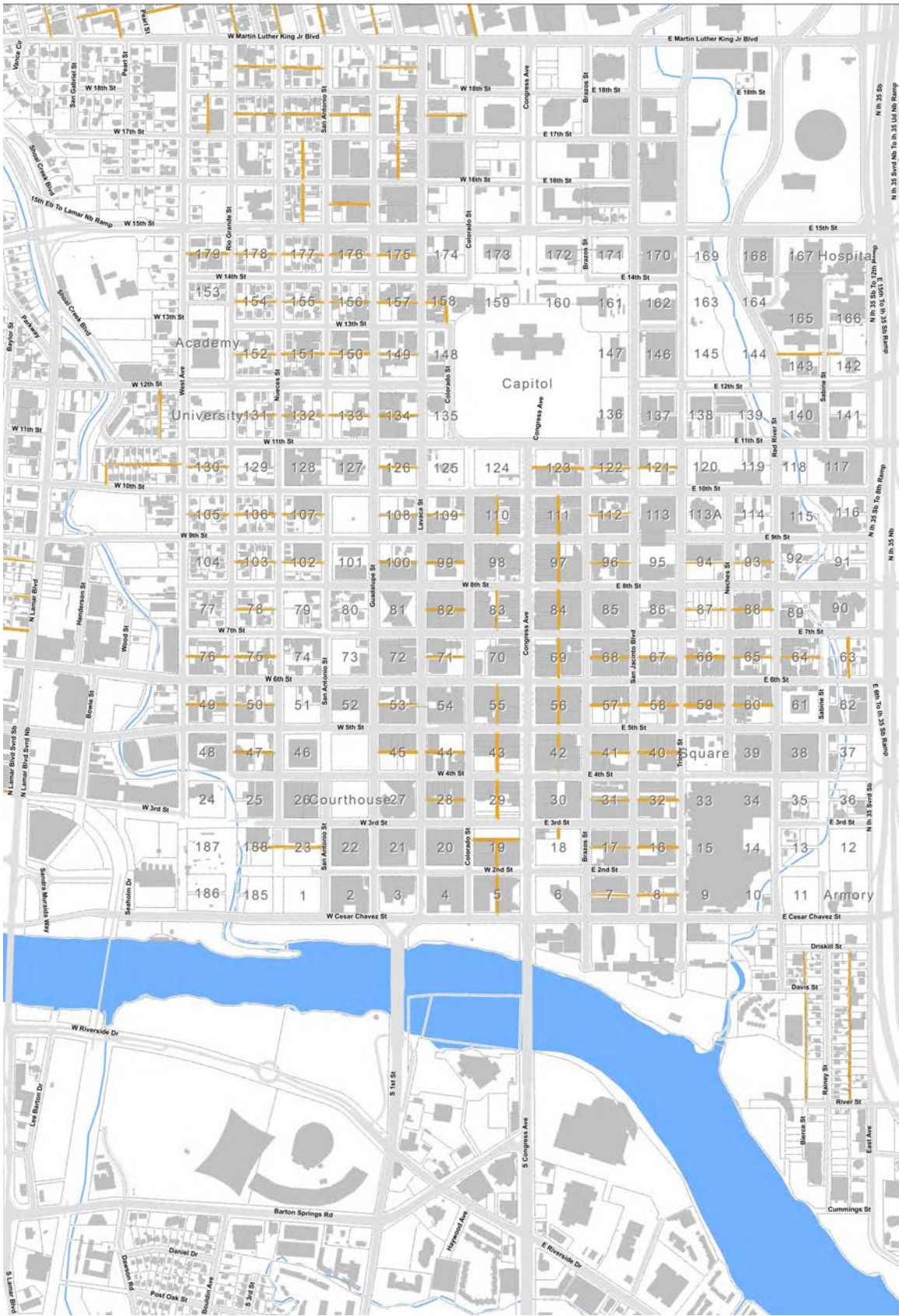
While the Plan calls for "preserving and enhancing alleys," the Plan lays out very little detail in this regard. The specific policies that the Plan lays out for alleys relate to enhancing their role in providing loading, serving, and parking access, such as through eliminating dumpsters and above-grade grease traps.<sup>ix</sup> There is no tie made in the Plan between alleys and the Plan's core vision of creating a "dense and livable pattern of development that supports a vibrant day and nighttime environment" and forming an "an interconnected pattern of streets, parks, and public spaces that instill a unique sense of place and community."<sup>x</sup> Recognizing the dual roles that some alleys can serve



to provide critical off-street services while also supporting a vibrant downtown would help advance the city's vision for Downtown.

Thinking about a broader set of uses for alleys also supports the Plan's vision for preserving and highlighting downtown's historic resources. Currently there are two occasions where the Plan mentions protecting the historical features of alleys: The first is where the Plan calls for including the portion of the north-south alley immediately west of Congress Avenue in the Warehouse District in a possible Local Historic District (this particular alley runs largely intact from Lady Bird Lake to the Capitol), and the second is where the Plan calls for "ensur[ing] a compatible relationship between new development and historic buildings with a landmark designation, including setting towers back from alley to provide appropriate separation."<sup>xi</sup> We believe the Plan's vision for historic preservation can be extended to include the historic resources found within the alleys themselves.

Citing the work of the Downtown Commission's alley activation workgroup, the Austin City Council adopted a resolution on March 21, 2013, calling for the creation of a Downtown Austin Alley Master Plan. In adopting the resolution, the Austin City Council expressed a commitment to Austin's downtown alleys, by calling upon the council to "strive to preserve possibilities for Austin's urban alleys" and to "refrain from vacating alleys at least until the plan has been completed and reviewed." The master plan will verify existing conditions; analyze alleys and their uses and cultural/historical significance; identify which alleys offer the most potential for ongoing or permanent activation; address the merits of allowing loading and unloading by right; and describe other opportunities and challenges that may exist. However, the master planning process has not begun yet, and no funding has been allocated for the development of the plan.



Map of existing paved alleys in the downtown area.  
 Produced by Michael Knox, City of Austin, Economic Development Department



### III. Planning for the Downtown Austin Alley Activation Project

The Downtown Commission's alley workgroup decided early on that it wanted to be hands-on by doing an actual activation project rather than talking about how to go about creating one. The team started with questions such as:

- "Which city regulations would be supportive?"
- "Which ones would stand in the way?"
- "How difficult would it be to gather private support?"
- "How could the goals best be communicated to adjacent property owners?"

After laying out the questions the workgroup wanted to investigate, the team adopted the following vision statement and goal during its initial meetings:

Vision Statement: A downtown alley will be activated into a vibrant, people-oriented space.

Goal: By end of April 2013, our workgroup will implement a pilot alley reactivation project involving the temporary activation of a downtown alley. The project will allow us to build images of success and also to test barriers and opportunities for future activation of other downtown alleys. We will summarize these findings in a report to City Council.

As the workgroup proceeded, the team also asked what it would mean to create a vibrant, people-oriented space in the context of an alley. Before finding specific programmatic solutions to the project goal, the team outlined its vision for a successful Austin alleyway:

Vision: A successful Austin alley will: be safe and walkable; celebrate nature; foster commercial presence; allow for food and beverages; provide a venue for public art; be augmented with light and sound; stimulate the senses; honor existing historical features; provide family-friendly activities and spaces; be a location for comfort and warmth; provide a clean, functional space; respect current legitimate uses; and makes people want to return again and again. (For good measure the team also added that the alley activation should feel magical.)

After establishing the group's goals and vision, the next step was to find a specific alley for conducting a pilot activation project. The workgroup spent several months developing criteria and selecting the alley for the activation project. To test possible alleys for the project, the workgroup created a set of criteria to evaluate Austin's downtown alleys:

- Ability to accommodate existing services: delivery, garbage pick up, fire, possibly parking

- Surrounded by buildings on both sides (i.e., to have the feeling of an alley)
- Current undesirable activity (that could thus be offset with an activation project)
- Physical interaction with businesses on the alley (i.e., businesses with entrances that faced the alley)
- Support of surrounding businesses (this actually turned out to be a prerequisite)
- Ability for the alley to be cleaned up
- Unique characteristics (architecture, trees, etc)
- Walkability: ability to walk to the alley and within the alley
- Ability to be magical/beautiful
- Current desirable activity
- ADA accessibility
- Connectivity between alleys
- Placemaking potential

In December and early January, the workgroup members spread across downtown to survey the alleys and took pictures, which were uploaded onto a shared Dropbox folder. Using the results, the workgroup narrowed down the list of potential alleys to a few that showed the greatest potential to serve as a pilot project. The group then reached out to the business owners to find out whether they would support an activation project in the alley. Based on the assessment results and conversations with the business owners, the workgroup selected the alley that runs North-South from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> streets, between Congress Avenue and Brazos.<sup>xii</sup> This alley was named “Alley 111,” following the numerical designation for that city block provided on a City of Austin map.

## IV. Activating Alley 111: 20ft Wide

After the alley was selected, many weeks of planning went into how to activate the alley. Because of the 20-foot width of the alley—like most of the other alleys laid out in the Waller Plan grid—the activation project was penned “20ft Wide.” There were two main areas of focus for the project: the physical space and the event programming. Fortunately, the team comprised a diverse set of professional partners that included curatorial lead Art Alliance Austin; architects Dan Cheetham (Fyoog) and Michelle Tarsney; Creative Action, a local non-profit group; and TBG Partners Chris Jackson and Nicole Warns, who led the work on the space’s physical design.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Activation through physical improvements:**

As a physical space, the workgroup aimed to create a place that was human-scale and had visual interest at multiple levels, while working with a very small budget. The City of Austin Cultural Arts Division provided a grant of \$5,000 for the visual art installed overhead, and TBG provided a grant of \$500 for the physical design on the ground level. The rest of the physical improvements were covered through in-kind donations of materials and time.

The alley was activated with a variety of art, plants, seating, and other elements, while accommodating the existing alley functions for trash disposal and access by KTBC/Fox 7 of the northern half of the alley for the company’s parking.<sup>xiv</sup> For seating, the alley used primarily donated materials that reflected typical alley functions: painted crates (which also served as book shelves), cut polystyrene shipping foam, and burlap sacks stuffed with second-hand clothes. The space also included two sets of tables and chairs loaned out by Forms + Surfaces, and a variety of plants on loan from a local nursery.



Photo courtesy of Michael Knox, City of Austin, Economic Development Department

For the art elements, Dan Cheetham and Michelle Tarsney designed a temporary aerial sculpture with brightly colored, interwoven twine that was hung across the alleyway, together with a collection of paper origami peace cranes created by children at the Art City Austin festival from the prior weekend under the direction of Creative Action. Additional art installed in the alley included a whimsical temporary mural painting of peppermints (which was coupled with a peppermint scavenger hunt) by Matthew J. Winters, and a series of temporary stencil paintings of birds on the asphalt pavement created by Griffon Ramsey with assistance by Burt Norville. Recordings of bird calls typical to Central Texas, provided courtesy of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, were mixed by composer, performer and sound artist Steve Parker into a soundscape that could be heard in the alley during much of the event.

### **Activation through activities and events:**

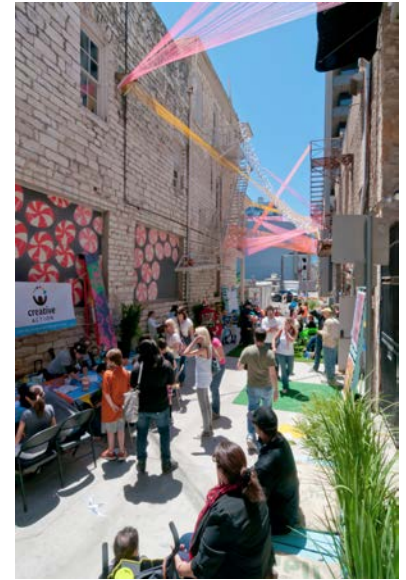
The workgroup decided that the activation project should offer diverse programming that would appeal to a broad range of age groups and interests and that would showcase many of the different ways in which an alley could be activated as a public space.

The programming consisted of the following:

- **Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup> PM: Opening Night Party.** Hosted by the Fusebox Festival and Art Alliance Austin, this event featured an a capella performance by Convergence. The event attracted over 200 people.
- **Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup> PM: Pecha Kucha.** Art Alliance Austin hosted an evening PechaKucha session where 20 presenters showed 20 images for 20 seconds each as part of a fast-moving presentation. The alley was packed, with approximately 300 people in attendance.
- **Friday, April 18<sup>th</sup> AM: Pop-Up Commuter Breakfast.** Zipcar and Movability Austin hosted a morning commuter breakfast attended by downtown workers and commuters who enjoyed coffee and pastries. The alley remained open throughout most of the day, with WIFI connections, for downtown workers to use as a meeting space and workspace.
- **Friday, April 18<sup>th</sup> PM: Dining in the Alley.** The alley workgroup and volunteers enjoyed a candlelit dinner in the alley.
- **Saturday, April 19<sup>th</sup> All-Day: Alley Kids Family Day.** On Saturday, the alley was transformed into an artist-driven playground for kids and adults, including musical performances, acro yoga, jugglers, and hula hoopers, supported with a \$1,100 grant from the City of Austin Cultural Arts Division; storytelling hosted by

the Austin Public Library Friends Foundation; origami hosted by Creative Action; and food trucks. Dozens of families attended.

- **Sunday, April 20<sup>th</sup>: Open Day.** Sunday was an open day for the public to come and experience the alley without any programming.



Photos courtesy of Michael Knox, City of Austin, Economic Development Department



### **Key elements to the success of 20ft Wide**

There were many components of 20ft Wide that contributed to the success of the project. The first component was the support of the surrounding property owners, which meant maintaining several of the alley's core service features, including trash pick up and service delivery. A second component, which was just as critical, was a multidisciplinary planning team of dedicated and passionate volunteers. Each team member for 20ft Wide had a different skill set that added value to the project and enabled us to overcome the roadblocks we confronted during the project. A third component was the project's diverse programming, which appealed to different, targeted audiences and cut across multiple generations, thus allowing for us to highlight the multiple roles alley can play and allowing us to serve a wide cross-section of the community.

The particular alley we selected was also an important component of the project's success. The alley's scale and rich architectural features, all contributed to the engaging and intimate nature of the space. The support and involvement of City Council and multiple city departments also turned out to be critical—including, but by no means limited to, the funding the City provided for part of the artists' costs, assistance with navigating the special events permit process, in-kind donations of city equipment, and City Council-authorized fee waivers. Other key components that made the project possible included: the in-kind support of numerous organizations and individuals; access to a vacant building space to stage events; and access to electricity and water from the adjacent property owners.

### **Surveys:**

As a test of existing and potential policy measures, the 20ft Wide team understood the importance of collecting data about the activation project, and so a simple survey instrument was created and administered during most of the events.<sup>xv</sup> Results showed that the alley project drew in tourists as well as residents from outside of downtown: 10% of attendees were visitors to the city, 84% of attendees surveyed did not live downtown, and 57% did not work downtown. Almost half arrived by means other than car.

In addition, the survey showed a great deal of interest in the space both by people who came intentionally to see the installation and by those who just happened to pass by. Some quotes from the surveys:

- “When you see something like this it changes your whole attitude in a positive way.”
- “It’s like a kiss on the cheek.”
- “Got me into a space I otherwise wouldn’t.”
- “Would love to utilize this space; a place to meet for appointments.”
- “This should be done more.”

- “Reclaiming an old alley that would have otherwise been a lost space made it fabulous!”
- “Great idea! Great way to turn a space into something inhabitable for both old and young.”
- “Like the feel, like you are walking into a new little world, like Dr. Seuss; should be permanent.”
- “Oh, I don’t want to leave this place.”
- “It’s awesome, very relaxing, makes downtown more exciting.”
- “It’s fun, a great idea, they should make this permanent. I’m from Germany and there’s much more going on there in the streets.”
- “Love the concept of using alleys for public spaces.”
- “Charming and a lot of potential. “
- “Beautiful, brightens up the alley, could be a great public space.”
- “Great initiative; we want more public space.”

### **Public Relations and Press**

20ft Wide received a lot of recognition in the press. The project was featured on the cover of the Urban Land Institute’s Tactical Urbanism magazine, on KUT,<sup>xvi</sup> the Austin Business Journal,<sup>xvii</sup> KEYE-TV,<sup>xviii</sup> and in other media outlets. The City of Austin’s Channel 6 created a time lapse video showing the installation and first series of events in the alley: <http://youtu.be/j2VGSiu6ZPQ>. A video summary of the activation project, also created by Channel 6, is available at <http://youtu.be/fxx1q5oPbVk>.



Photos courtesy of Michael Knox, City of Austin, Economic Development Department

## V. Why Activate Austin's Downtown Alleys

In embracing the transformation of alleys into vibrant public spaces, cities throughout the world have recognized that activated alleys can play a central role in enhancing the character and livability of a dense urban core and facilitate the ability of cities to offer a diverse range of public spaces. Cities such as Seattle and San Francisco—which have strong support for alley activation projects—have also found that alleys, compared to other urban spaces such as streets and parks, provide inviting, intimate, and human-scale experiences that are hard to provide with other types of public spaces. Cities have also found ways to activate alleys—with their broad range of potential uses and economic benefits—through a relatively small investment of public resources.

In Austin, as the downtown area experiences ever-increasing population growth, new public spaces are needed more than ever to fulfill the needs of current residents and to meet the expectations of new residents, including those arriving from cities where smaller-scaled urban public spaces are the norm. When looking at Austin's downtown alleys as possible public space amenities, it must also be remembered that these spaces are needed to accommodate existing functions that are integral to the operations of downtown businesses and organizations. Downtown alleys allow for functions such as trash pick up and service deliveries to be handled without disrupting traffic on streets. Other urban infrastructure functions that alleys provide, depending on the alley, include: secondary pedestrian and bikeway routes, fire lanes, and access to loading docks and parking garages.

### **Working within the Downtown Austin Plan**

The Downtown Commission workgroup's vision for reinvigorating Austin's alleys draws from the goals and vision statements set forth in the Downtown Austin Plan (DAP), whereby, "[i]f Downtown is to continue to attract new residents, businesses and visitors, excellent parks, open spaces and streetscapes will be essential to its success."<sup>xix</sup> As the Plan states, the "quality and interconnectivity" of our public spaces "defines to a great extent our day-to-day urban experience and the overall livability and identity of Downtown."<sup>xx</sup>

Specifically, the activation of Austin's downtown alleys directly supports the following vision statements set forth in the Downtown Austin Plan, as laid out on the City's home page for the Plan:<sup>xxi</sup>

- A dense and livable pattern of development that supports a vibrant day and nighttime environment.
- An interconnected pattern of streets, parks, and public spaces that instill a unique sense of place and community.
- A beloved fabric of historic places, buildings, and landscapes that celebrate the unique journey Austin has taken over the past 200 years.

- An array of innovative businesses – small and large – that are attracted to Downtown by its rich human capital and unique sense of place.
- A variety of districts and destinations that support the creative expression of Austin's citizenry through art, music, theater, dance, and performance.<sup>xxii</sup>

Additionally, and related to the last vision statement above, the revitalization of Austin alleyways supports the Downtown Austin Plan's goals of providing for new cultural facilities and live music venues, incubator spaces for artists, rehearsal and performing spaces, and other creative culture uses and businesses.<sup>xxiii</sup>



*San Francisco Alley.*  
Photo courtesy of Heather Way, Downtown Commission

## VI. The Potential for Future Alley Activations in Austin

Over the past decade, Austin has transformed from a small city with a low-key downtown to a major urban center known for its features like the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake and its entertainment districts. As Austin matures as a city, the city's downtown must develop in ways that support a full and rich urban experience—particularly if we are to remain competitive as a destination for new residents and new businesses.

We know from the work done by other cities that the development of alleys holds a tremendous potential for a relatively small investment—as spaces that already exist in the public realm. Some benefits that other cities have found from activating alleys, include the following:

### **Benefits of activating alleys:**

- Improving public safety and beautification of downtown.
- Providing opportunities for engaging public spaces—places for people to visit, relax, and enjoy being with other people.
- Providing affordable opportunities for new small businesses and expansion of existing local businesses (e.g., Sydney, Australia small business program for alleys).
- Supporting green corridors (Austin,<sup>xxiv</sup> Chicago).
- Celebrating visual and performing arts by creating areas to showcase the work of local artists.
- Expanding the pedestrian network and connectivity to other parts of downtown.
- Highlighting historical assets.
- Enhancing pedestrian experiences through car-free, intimately-scaled spaces.
- Providing intimate retail zones.

The revitalization of Austin's alleys can be supported through both physical improvements and the support of specific programming opportunities.

### **Potential Physical improvements:**

Learning from other cities, we can see that the size of alleys is one of their greatest assets. They provide an intimate scale that serves as a sharp contrast to whole block developments and surrounding streetscapes. Meanwhile, the features of alleys that limit positive pedestrian engagement—such as dumpsters lining the walls, limited lighting, and an overall grimy atmosphere—can be easily addressed with a range of physical improvements.

The type of physical improvements needed to activate an alley will be unique to each alley and should draw upon existing positive features of the alley. Some may be activated with very small-scale and inexpensive changes such as suspended artwork or



engaging lighting. Others may need more extensive improvement to allow for both utilitarian and social uses.



*Seville, Spain Alley.*

Photo courtesy of Heather Way, Downtown Commission

Examples of potential improvements to enhance public engagement and public safety in alleys include:

- Plantings and window boxes
- Opening up of existing doors to allow entranceways into the alley
- Incorporating permanent or temporary art overhead and on building facades
- Lighting
- Paving upgrades; incorporating a variety of paving: can make an alley more inviting to pedestrians and provide a clearer signal to cars to not enter or to drive more slowly
- Seating and tables
- Signs at the entrances to the alleys, with the name for the alley
- Canopies to provide shade
- Physical upgrades to building facades to facilitate location of cafes, retail, and other businesses
- More visually appealing dumpsters

- Addressing the concentration of garbage dumpsters such as through moving or consolidating dumpsters in one part of alley, or offering alternative disposal methods (e.g., Seattle bans dumpsters in city right-of-way and offers bag service with frequent pick ups).
- Entry gateways where alley meets street to invite exploration.

**Potential Programming and Activities:**

Once the physical space in an alley has been modified to enhance the public’s engagement while preserving the alley’s utilitarian service functions, a broad array of different programming and activities can be imagined, which could be offered temporarily or permanently in the alley. Other cities have activated alleys for a number of different activities and uses, such as:

- Walking tours: historical tour, art tour, etc.
- Historical programs to highlight historic elements in the alley, such as historical signs and walking tour app
- Movies
- Televised sporting events
- Live music
- Places to meet, work, relax
- Outdoor dining: permanent restaurants as well as cafés that pop up for lunch and/or dinner
- Bike lanes and pedestrian passageways
- Shopping districts
- Retail and small business venues
- Art events
- Art galleries
- Family-friendly events



*San Francisco Alley.*  
Photo courtesy of Heather Way,  
Downtown Commission

Importantly, what many other cities have shown is that these uses can often be “layered” depending on the time of day. Thus, an alley that provides for garbage pick-up and deliveries during the morning hours and retail during business hours, can turn into an art event space at night and a family-oriented space on the weekends.<sup>xxv</sup>

In her master’s thesis for the University of Texas, Sarah Hammerschmidt identified three different typologies for activating Austin’s downtown alleys:<sup>xxvi</sup>

- *Activity Thoroughways*: alleys that serve as nodes for activities such as cafes, bars, and retail.
- *Pedestrian and Bicycle Thoroughways*: alleys that prioritize pedestrian and bicycle access to provide connections to parks, businesses, and retail.
- *Green Thoroughways*: alleys that expand park space in downtown through the addition of grass and other plantings, or a hybrid model that incorporates both grass and pavement.



*San Francisco Alley.*  
Photo courtesy of Heather Way, Downtown Commission

## VII. The Logistics of Activating Alleys

While the 20ft Wide project helped to identify potential roles for Austin's alleys as engaging public spaces, the project also identified many of the challenges that others will face when looking to do similar types of projects. When working on a future activation project, whether temporary or permanent in nature, it will be important to consider the following:

1. **Heavy concentration of dumpsters.** Many of the alleys in downtown alley are lined with large dumpsters. For the 20ft Wide installation, we were able to work with Austin Resource Recovery to temporarily move one of the dumpsters to the other side of the alley near a big concentration of dumpsters, which cleared up space for event programming and made the space more conducive to pedestrians.
2. **Poor lighting.** Austin's downtown alleys typically have poor lighting, making it difficult to create a stronger sense of safety in these spaces.
3. **Parking (legally and illegally).** Several alleys we surveyed contain permanent parking spaces for surrounding businesses and entrances to parking garages. We also observed several instances of cars parked illegally in alleys.
4. **Fire code.** Two primary issues related to fire safety arose during the 20ft Wide installation process: 1) a bar on utilizing any materials overhead that could be considered flammable; and 2) the issue of ensuring fire truck access through alley. It is unclear at this point how other cities handle fire truck access in activated alleys. This is an issue that will need to be explored further.
5. **Alley entrances and traffic control.** During the 20ft Wide installation, one of the primary concerns was traffic control and the maintenance of pedestrian safety in an area typically inhabited by cars. The City required us to erect large traffic barricades, but these barricades then made the alleyway less inviting and deterred cyclists and pedestrians from entering the space. Other cities have addressed safety concerns with less obstructive barriers. This is an issue that should be explored further by figuring out a way to maintain safety while also enhancing aesthetics and facilitating access by pedestrians and cyclists.
6. **Special Events permit process.** Our project highlighted the need for a separate Special Events permit process that is calibrated for smaller events such as our 20ft Wide installation. The Special Events permit process we utilized—which is in the process of undergoing changes—assumes heavy crowd concentrations and increased life safety hazards brought about by a festival atmosphere. Although the City of Austin Special Events team cooperated to help the 20ft Wide take place, we found the following requirements to be overly taxing and recommend they be eliminated or reduced.

- a. Traffic engineer-certified parking control plan. Standard details and procedures should be created for alley closures in lieu of requiring an event sponsor to pay an engineer to certify a traffic control plan, which can run more than a thousand dollars.
  - b. Requirement to hire police. Even though the Special Events office required us to hire police to guard the barricades during the 20ft Wide alley events (a fee which the Council waived), the police ended up not showing up to the events and the requirement seemed unnecessary.
  - c. The 180-day “minimum” City of Austin permit review period. This period is unnecessary for a small passive installation like 20ft Wide. We also found that the special events permit costs were not calibrated for small events.
  - d. The Special Events permit requirement to provide a fully-detailed drawing of the alley closure should be replaced with a Special Events permit checklist for small installations and events, similar to the checklist used for expedited building permit requirements and the site plan exemption process.
7. **Supported Services.** Alleys serve a critical infrastructure function for the downtown area and these services must be maintained. Some of these services include the passage of delivery trucks and dumpster trucks. Any future project will need to understand what and when service activities occur in the alley to carefully coordinate any temporary installation with the schedule for those services.
8. **Wayfinding.** The City of Austin recognizes the need to improve wayfinding for the downtown area for the benefit of both residents and visitors. Currently a plan is being formulated to address this critical need. During the production of the 20ft Wide event it was recognized that additional urban design elements, such as street signage, could improve the visibility of alleys and help people find and access them as part of their urban pedestrian experience.
9. **Funding.** Financial support is critical for creating vibrant urban spaces. While the 20ft Wide event was produced with relatively little money, the volunteer-based model used by the working group is not a sustainable model for creating lasting urban benefits. Larger budgets will be needed in order to provide permanent investments for alleys to become both economic and cultural assets for the city.
10. **Access to electricity.** Alley spaces not only need to support a wide range of infrastructural, logistical, and cultural needs, but they also need to take advantage of the various types of urban users that might use alleys at different times of day/night/week/season. Supporting nighttime activities (which come relatively early during the winter months), and daytime events (such as music) necessitates having access to electricity. Future event planning will need to establish early on in the planning process mechanisms for creating access to electricity.



**11. Adjacent Property and Business Owners.** As the team worked through the logistics of setting up the 20ft Wide event, we discovered that while adjacent business owners may support an activation project, the land owner may not. Many property owners are out of town and may not feel comfortable with a new idea for the space. From the 20ft Wide project, the team identified the need to work closely with business owners from day one in order to ensure support for the project.

From a regulatory standpoint, one of the most critical discoveries was the fact that the City of Austin does not actually own many the alleys downtown but instead only owns an easement. The surrounding property owners own the alleys. Any project involving a permanent activation of an alley will need to explore the exact parameters of the City's easements and what type of legal documentation is needed to facilitate the permanent activation.

It is also important to say that not every alley is appropriate for an activation project. Some bear a heavy reliance on delivery trucks throughout the day as well as others that have parking garage entrances that remain active at all times.

#### **Next Steps for Planning Alley Events**

To activate Austin's alley network, it will take support from both elected officials and staff to create an overall vision for how alleys can support Austin as economic and cultural resources, and to administer the future efforts to bring such a vision to life. We recommend that any future efforts begin with a mapping exercise that would identify alleys that are ripe for activation projects and the individual private property owners that are needed to catalyze successful events.

After the team's experience with creating the 20ft Wide project we offer the following checklist to project managers looking to support future alley activation events.

#### *Alley Activation Checklist:*

- Identify supporting property owners and businesses along alley.
- Talk with City Special Events permit staff at least 4 months prior to event.
- Plan for space to accommodate food trucks and delivery vehicles for the event.
- Work with local businesses to accommodate expected flows of vehicular traffic.
- Address need for barricade requirements and search for possible new solution that would address aesthetic concerns as well.
- Address requirement for police presence at barricades.
- Meet with City of Austin Fire Department reviewers early in the process to identify any potential issues concerning flammable materials.
- Provide liability waivers for installation so the City is not held accountable beyond normal property protection.

## VIII. Examples of Alley Activation Programs in Other Cities

In cities around the world, alleys that once served as areas for trash and illicit activities have been transformed into engaging public spaces, economic engines, urban art galleries, and major tourist draws. The following are examples of cities that have been at the forefront of activating alleys in and around the downtown urban core:

**Fort Collins, Colorado.**<sup>xxvii</sup> After a pilot project that renovated two downtown alleys, the Downtown Development Authority in Fort Collins commissioned an alley master plan in 2008, through a process that included workshops with building owners and other downtown stakeholders. The Authority plans to renovate a total of 14 alleys utilizing tax revenue from a downtown public improvement district, with the goal of enhancing the alleys aesthetically, providing safe pedestrian access, and stimulating economic vitality and use of the spaces. So far, at least 5 alleys have been renovated, at a cost of approximately \$900,000 each, through a series of physical improvements including special pavers, lighting, flower pots, and storm water management improvements. New trash enclosures were built, and benches were placed in the alleys. An Art in Public Places program provided for 40 granite pavers engraved with children’s drawings. Following the renovations, private improvements swiftly followed, including several new small business storefronts and a beer garden. The renovated alleys now serve as lively pedestrian walkways, new retail spaces, and gathering spaces. With an increase in pedestrian traffic and customers, the reception of local businesses has been very positive.

**Melbourne, Australia:** Melbourne is a worldwide leader when it comes to transforming its alleys (called laneways in Australia) into engaging amenities providing a broad range of experiences. The activation of the city’s alleys is a central part of the Melbourne City Plan and began in the 1980s as a way to improve livability in downtown through engagement of public spaces. Since then, dozens of alleys in the city have been revitalized into an urban network of alleys with art installations, small cafes, residences, and retail.<sup>xxviii</sup> Today, the alleys, which cover 3.5 kilometers (22 miles), are a vital part of the city’s urban landscape and attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. To support the alley transformation, the City operates a “Love your Laneway” project,<sup>xxix</sup> which partners with local stakeholders to improve and revitalize alleys through waste management, amenities and access, public lighting and road surfacing, and artistic and cultural uses. The City has adopted a number of planning policies to support the transformation of the alleys. In 2001, the City created a Laneways Commission Program, which commissions artists each year to transform alleys into contemporary art galleries, and in 2007 adopted a policy addressing building form and frontages and other design elements in alleys. The City Council’s current “Lanes policy” calls for on-going alley preservation and revitalization through the coupling of service functions and pedestrian amenities. The city has also provided grants to businesses to locate in alleys.

**San Francisco:** The City of San Francisco has made the preservation and activation of alleys a citywide priority, recognizing their important role in dense urban neighborhoods for creating human-scale space and pedestrian-oriented spaces, while breaking up the scale of large blocks and creating a more useable development pattern.<sup>xxx</sup> Dozens of alleys in the urban core have been renovated and transformed into spaces actively utilized by small businesses, retail, and dining/entertainment establishments. Belden Place in the financial district is one of the city’s most famous alleyways, with multiple restaurants and outdoor seating—the alley has become a magnet for residents and visitors. Some of the alleys are open for services during the early morning hours, and then closed to vehicular traffic during the day. Maiden alley, for example, has two beautiful white gates at end of the alley, which are used to close off the alley to vehicles starting in the late morning, when the alley is transformed into a shopping esplanade with high end boutique stores. New alleys are also being included in new development to break up super blocks and provide opportunities for small business opportunities and enlivened public spaces, and the City has developed height limits and step backs along alleys to allow light and air to circulate. The City’s general plan bans the selling off of alleys, and the city routinely incorporates the makeover of alleys in its public works projects.



*San Francisco Alley.*  
Photo courtesy of Heather Way, Downtown Commission

**Sydney, Australia:** To activate its alleys (aka laneways), the City of Sydney provides a number of programs, which grew out of a 1993 study evaluating the potential of Sydney's alleys and recognizing their role as economic engines for the city. The City is upgrading paving and installing a range of physical improvements including lighting, street furniture, signs, and permanent and temporary art installations in its alleys. The City sponsors a Laneway Art Program, which each year commissions seven different art projects for alleys, resulting in a range of art installations attractive to a broad range of age groups.<sup>xxxii</sup> The City sponsors a walking guide of laneway art in the central city to showcase these installations. Sydney also offers business incentives via "fine grain" matching grants to small businesses to encourage the activation of alleys through cafes, retail, and galleries.<sup>xxxiii</sup> For development adjacent to alleys, the City has adopted development guidelines requiring that new development reinforce the role of the alley as public open space and enhance pedestrian access, encourage pedestrian use by providing for retail or other activity, and provide for service access as appropriate.

**Brisbane, Australia:** Through Brisbane's Vibrant Laneways and Small Spaces program, which is part of the City's Centre City Master Plan, Brisbane is leading a number of alley activation projects to transform alleys into "imaginative, fun and engaging" spaces.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The program includes a new art program showcasing the work of nine artists in alleys and physical improvements such as new lighting, seating, art work, and paving. The city has completed more than three activation projects and is currently leading five more projects.

**Perth, Australia:** In 2008, the City of Perth adopted a formal strategy to revitalize the city's alleys, followed by an action plan for each of the alleys targeted for revitalization.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The City evaluated each alley and its potential for revitalization and then identified priority projects. The project has resulted in the revitalization of several alleys and stimulated commercial interest in previously neglected spaces.

**Seattle:** Seattle has revitalized a number of alleys in the city's urban core and adopted policies to promote future activation projects. The City of Seattle adopted new special permit policies to make it easier for nonprofit groups and businesses to host special events in alleys, and a nonprofit created a guidebook on how to put on events in alleys. One major step the City took was to address the concentration of dumpsters in its alleys through the adoption of the Clear Alleys Program.<sup>xxxv</sup> The program removed 700 dumpsters in downtown alleys and replaced them with smaller color-coded bags and small containers, coupled with increasing garbage collection to multiple times a day. The City also banned permanent storage of containers in the City's right of way, including alleys. The initiative was aimed at increasing the attractiveness of alleys for pedestrians; allowing better alley access for business services and possible expansion of commercial activity; and creating cleaner, safer alley spaces. Much of the alley activation work in Seattle has been lead or spurred by two nonprofits, the Alley Network Project and International Sustainability Institute, which have developed partnerships with surrounding businesses and stakeholders in the Pioneer Square area. The City of Seattle

has also adopted a stringent street and alley vacation ordinance to ensure that alleys are not vacated if they address purely private concerns such as acquiring additional property for development.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

**Chicago:** As a city, Chicago has more alleyways than any other city in the world. Improving these alleys is recognized as being essential for both the environment and for the quality of life of the residents. One of the alley initiatives the city has spearheaded is the Chicago Green Alley Program, which began in 2007. This initiative lays out a series of recommended design features that can help homeowners and businesses develop their alleys in a way to more effectively deal with the issues of storm water management, urban heat island effect, materials recycling, and lighting to reduce nighttime glare. By creating a guidebook of best management practices, the city shows how accessible design options can create alley spaces that will work better as infrastructure and have the added benefit of being beautiful spaces as well.

**Los Angeles:** Los Angeles has recently activated a number of urban and neighborhood alleys into engaging public spaces. One of the most recent transformations was the EaCa Alley in Hollywood. The alley was originally a crime-ridden area, but then transformed into a pedestrian thoroughfare and dining space in 2012. The idea for transforming the alley grew out of a UCLA student's master thesis. The transformation was made possible through a collaboration of the City Council, the local redevelopment association, and the support of the surrounding business owners, who formed an alley association after seeing the value in attracting pedestrians into the alley and using the alley for dining space. The transformation cost \$800,000 and included repaving with red bricks, storm water and drainage improvements, lighting, and elimination of trash bins. The city issued permits to the surrounding businesses to offer seating up to ten feet into the alley along with serving food and alcohol in the alley.



## IX. Policy Recommendations

There are a number of new policies and practices that Austin could adopt to support the activation of Austin’s downtown alleys. Additional information on the examples referenced below is available in Appendix C.

### **DOWNTOWN PLAN AMENDMENTS**

1. Amend the Downtown Austin Plan to add the following policy goal: With support of the surrounding businesses, establish a program for renovating and enhancing downtown alleys to serve as lively pedestrian walkways, new spaces for artists and small businesses, and vibrant gathering spaces.

### **DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT**

2. As part of the Downtown Alley Master Plan under development, adopt and implement a comprehensive ten-year strategy to revitalize five to ten of Austin’s downtown alleys as vibrant, activated public spaces. See, for example, the plans adopted by Fort Collins, Colorado, and Perth, Australia. We recommend the master plan assign typologies based on the potential each alley offers for being activated, based on the recommendations in Sara Hammerschmidt’s thesis discussed above. We also recommend the master plan process include one or more community charrettes to capture the community’s vision for downtown’s alleys.
3. Through the Public Works Department and in collaboration with downtown stakeholders, develop a template for design standards to facilitate the installation of physical improvements in alleys across downtown to enhance safety and create more pedestrian-oriented experiences, such as better lighting, special paving, and seating. See, for example, the design standards promoted in Activating Alleys for a Lively City. We recommend the City explore additional partnerships with the UT School of Architecture for leading the charrettes, developing the master plan, and assisting with other aspects of these policy recommendations.
4. In partnership with the surrounding businesses, the Downtown Austin Alliance, the Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association, and other stakeholders, select one to two alleys as “catalyst” projects for permanent activation in the next two years.
5. While preserving the role of alleys for trash pick up, create a program to remove and consolidate trash dumpsters located in alleys downtown and, over time, to change the appearance of the remaining dumpsters to make them more attractive. Explore a program similar to Seattle’s Clean Alley program for removing of the large-scale dumpsters and replacing them with trash bins and more frequent pik-ups.

6. Ensure that the unique historical features and facades of alleys are incorporated into the City's historic preservation programs for downtown.
7. Adopt a process for naming Austin's downtown alleys and creating street signs at the entrances of the alleys.
8. For new development: adopt design standards or guidelines for new development along alleys. The standards could address the design of the "backside" of the building facing the alley to facilitate a pedestrian-oriented environment and encourage small businesses, cafes, and retail in the alley. Consideration should be given to banning blank facades in new development facing alleys. See, for example, the City of San Francisco's alley design standards.
9. Include funding in the next transportation bond initiative for improvements to alleys and the creation and implementation of the downtown alley master.

#### **PROGRAMMATIC SUPPORT**

10. Develop a plan for how city staff could support temporary and permanent alley activation projects. One possibility is the development of a team of existing city staff from across departments, including Economic Development Department, Planning and Development Review, and Parks and Recreation, to work collaboratively on creating and enhancing public open spaces, including alleyways.
11. Evaluate the new changes to the City's special events permit process to ensure that they facilitate the ability of organizations to host special alley activation events. See, for example, the special permitting process for alleys adopted in Seattle. In facilitating events in alleys, Austin's special events office should adopt a policy allowing for the placement of alternative kinds of barricades during alley activation events, rather than the traditional orange and white large street barricades which impede pedestrian access into the alley. See, for example, Seattle's alley activation projects, which utilize small orange cones or no barricades at all, and San Francisco's artistic Maiden Lane gates.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The policy regarding the placement of police officers at the barricades should also be reviewed; this is not a practice followed by other cities we identified with activated alleys.
12. Create an alley event handbook to highlight how to navigate the city permitting process and put on an alley activation event. See, for example, the special permitting process and handbook for alleys adopted in Seattle.

## **SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT**

13. Create a grant and loan program to facilitate the location of small businesses in alleys. See, for example, the “fine grain” grant program adopted in Sydney, Australia.

## **THE ARTS**

14. Commission artists and partner with property owners to install permanent and temporary public art in alleyways and examine the creation of additional public and public-private relationships that would foster permanent and temporary public art installations in alleys. Potential sources of funding could include outside fundraising, foundation support, hotel/motel taxes for promotion of tourism (especially the new taxes that will be generated from the multiple hotels under development), the Art In Public Places (AIPP) 2% allocation from capital improvement project budgets (such as for repairs made to surrounding streets), downtown Public Improvement District dollars, and partnerships with local businesses (such as establishing a matching grants program with the AIPP and local businesses). For example, see the robust public art alley programs offered in Sydney and Melbourne as models.

## **TOURISM**

15. Create a downtown alley walking tour mobile app for residents and tourists to explore Austin’s downtown alleys and discover their historical and architectural features.

## Appendix A: Project Participants

### **Downtown Alley Conversion Workgroup Members (“Team Alley”)**

Melissa Barry, Downtown Austin Alliance  
Thomas Butler, Downtown Austin Alliance  
Dan Cheetham, Fyoog  
Megan Crigger, City of Austin Economic Development Department, Cultural Arts Division  
Ann S. Graham, Community Arts Consultant  
Shannon Halley, Councilmember Kathie Tovo’s Office  
Chris Jackson, TBG Partners  
Kit Johnson, City of Austin Public Works Department  
Michael Knox, City of Austin Economic Development Department  
Michael McGill, Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole’s Office  
Matt Parkerson, Councilmember Chris Riley’s Office  
Meredith Powell, Art Alliance Austin  
Lynn Osgood, Downtown Commission and Parks Board  
Kevin Shaw, City of Austin Economic Development Department, Cultural Arts Division  
Michelle Tarsney, Architect  
Rachel Tepper, University of Texas, School of Community and Regional Planning  
Nicole Warns, TBG  
Heather K. Way, Downtown Commission  
Bart Whatley, Downtown Commission and Design Commission  
Barbara Brown Wilson, University of Texas Center for Sustainable Development

### **Creative and Project Partners:**

Art Alliance Austin  
Creative Action  
Fyoog  
TBG  
The Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Austin Public Library Friends Foundation and Badgerdog  
City of Austin Channel 6  
City of Austin Cultural Arts Division  
City of Austin Downtown Commission  
City of Austin Economic Development Department  
City of Austin Public Works Department  
Downtown Austin Alliance  
Fusebox Festival  
Movability Austin  
UT Center for Sustainable Development  
Zipcar

**Non-Profit and Business Contributors and Supporters:**

Art Seen Alliance  
Anderson's Coffee  
Austin Club  
Austin Magic Camp  
BuildaSign  
Capitol Center  
City of Austin Street and Bridge  
Clean Scapes LP  
Co-Lab  
Colibri Cuisine  
Convergence  
Coolhaus Ice Cream  
Forms and Surfaces  
Nelsen Partners  
Shermin Nurseries Inc.  
Texas Juggling Society  
Texas Public Policy Foundation

**Individual Artists, Contributors, and Supporters:**

Ibrahim Aminou  
Brittany Andrews  
Cameron Beauchamp  
Lillian Beckwith  
Ron Berry  
Tammy Bishop  
Greg Budney  
Miyoko Chu  
Taylor Dinkins  
Zack Dryer  
Julie Finney  
Matt Fisher  
Glenn Gadbois  
Sean Gaulager  
Jenna Jasso  
Shirley Johnson  
Jeremy Kee  
Jena Kirkpatrick  
Shane Kistner  
Tommy Lather  
Pat Leonard



Mike Lewis  
Jim Maxwell  
Lana McGilvray  
Warren McKinney  
Brad Nelsen  
Burl Norville  
Brian Ott  
Aaron Parker-Fasel  
Steve Parker  
Hugh Powell  
Erika Ragsdale  
Griffon Ramsey  
Ken Richardson  
Keith Reeves  
Kenneth Rosenberg  
Cecily Sailer  
Sandra Turner Saldana  
Greg Sindelar  
James Stanley  
Oliver Steck  
DJ Stout  
Zac Tolbert  
Sallie Trout  
Dalton Wallace  
Mike Webster  
Matthew Winters  
Steve Wiswell  
Sue Young  
Cara Zimmer

**Special Thanks to:**

Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole  
Council Member Chris Riley  
Council Member Kathie Tovo  
Council Member Laura Morrison  
Frances Hargrove and the City of Austin Special Events Permits Office  
Howard Lazarus and the City of Austin Public Works Department

## Appendix B: 20Ft Wide Survey Instrument and Results

### 20ft Wide Alley Activation Survey Evaluation

How did you hear about 20ft Wide? \_\_\_\_\_

Was this event a destination  or did you chance upon it  ?

Are you a Resident  or Visitor  Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you work downtown? Yes  No  Do you live downtown? Yes  No

How did get to the event (walk, bike, bus, drive, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

What else will you do while downtown? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any comments to share about the event? \_\_\_\_\_

---

How did you hear about 20ft Wide? \_\_\_\_\_

Was this event a destination  or did you chance upon it  ?

Are you a Resident  or Visitor  Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you work downtown? Yes  No  Do you live downtown? Yes  No

How did get to the event (walk, bike, bus, drive, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

What else will you do while downtown? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any comments to share about the event? \_\_\_\_\_

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How did you hear about 20ft Wide? \_\_\_\_\_

Was this event a destination  or did you chance upon it  ?

Are you a Resident  or Visitor  Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you work downtown? Yes  No  Do you live downtown? Yes  No

How did get to the event (walk, bike, bus, drive, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

What else will you do while downtown? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any comments to share about the event? \_\_\_\_\_

20Ft Wide Survey Results									
How did you hear about 20ft Wide?	Was this event a destination or did you chance upon it?	Are you a resident or visitor?	Zipcode	Do you work downtown ?	Do you live downtown ?	How did you get the event?	What else will you do while downtown?	Do you have any comments to share about the event?	
1 Do 512 Family	Destination	Resident	78745	No	No	Drove	Might go eat	Neat small space	
2 Art City Austin	Destination	Resident	78705	No	N/A	Bus	Lunch	Glad we came	
3 Facebook	Destination	Resident	78745	No	N/A	Drove	Nothing	Great!	
4 Imagine Austin & Radio	Destination	Resident	78722	Yes	N/A	Bike	Starbucks, ArtHouse & Work	Great initiative, we want more public space	
5 Instagram	Destination	Resident	78705	Yes	No	Walk/ Bus	Working	Good use of space; "I feel at peace"	
6 Friend	Destination	Resident	78704	No	No	Car	N/A	Should be permanent	
7 Friend	Destination	Resident	78757	No	No	Car	Wander/ Adventure	Like the feel, like you are walking into a new little world, like Dr. Suess, Should be permanent	
8 Fusebox	Destination	Resident	78702	No	No	Car	N/A	Great to see under utilized spaces being used for community spaces; transformed into a beautiful place with art. Relaxing. More plants!	
9 Friend-Facebook/Instagram	Destination	Resident	78705	Yes	No	Bike	Go to work at 4:30	I wish more people would have known about it. I don't think people will believe me "Oh I don't want to leave this place"	
10 Work next door	Destination	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	Working	A couple of the club's members wondered "how much money the City was wasting on this."	
11 Email Newsletter	Destination	Resident	78723	Yes	No	Walk	Errands	It's awesome, very relaxing, it makes downtown more exciting	
12 Live Downtown	Destination	Resident	78701	Yes	Yes	Walk		It's fun, a great idea, they should make this permanent. I'm from Germany & there's much more goin on there in the streets.	
13 Ad at Art Festival	Destination	Resident	78759	No	No	Car	Maybe go for drinks	Impressive- everything should look like this.	
14 Heather Way	Destination	Resident	78704	No	No	Bus	Farmers Market	Not Yet.	
15 Friend & TV	Destination	Resident	78704	No	No	Bus	Farmers Market	It's great! Nice to see the city continue to mature. Just need to get more people involved. Thought it would be a fence block.	
16 Heather Way	Destination	Resident	78703	Yes	No	Drove	Library Visit	Cool idea. We should do more of these	
17 DAMA closures	Destination	Resident	78732	No	No	Drove	Breakfast, Farmers Market, Shopping	Love creative movement open to the public	
18 Facebook	Destination	Resident	78757	No	No	Drove	Coffee	It's great!	
19 Free Fun Austin	Destination	Resident	78748	No	No	Drove	Walk around	It's great. This is Austin, we love it!	
20 Tv News	Destination	Resident	78705	No	Yes	Walk	Ballet Austin Class	Seems nice	
21 N/A	Visiting from Nashville	N/A	N/A	No	No	Drove	N/A	N/A	
22 Do512.com	Destination	Resident	78704	No	No	Drove	Unknown	It's great, creative use of space you usually avoid	
23 Project Involvement	Destination	Visitor	78736	No	No	Drove		So far so good	
24 Looking for something else	Chance	Visitor	Houston					It's neat. It has a feeling like Europe	

20Ft Wide Survey Results									
How did you hear about 20ft Wide?	Was this event a destination or did you chance upon it?	Are you a resident or visitor?	Zipcode	Do you work downtown ?	Do you live downtown ?	How did you get the the event?	What else will you do while downtown?	Do you have any comments to share about the event?	
25	Art City Austin	Destination	78701	No	Yes	Walk	Renew library card, lunch	Nice to do these kinds of things- hope there are more of them	
26	Drive by	Chance		Yes	No	Drove	Market	Awesome. Could have done a dinner last, might do one behind me	
27	DANA	Destination		Yes	Yes	Bike	Breakfast Tacos	Arts Mural Program	
28	Walking by	Chance	NA			Walk		Fantastic Idea	
29	Austin Biz Journal	Destination	78721	Yes	No	Drove	Brunch	Cool Idea- interested to see id this happens again	
30	Facebook Friend	Destination	78745	No	No	Drove	Farmers Market	Love the concept of using alley's for public spaces	
31	Newspaper	Destination	78704	No	No	Drove	None	Charming and a lot of potential	
32	Free fun in Austin.com	Destination	78729	Yes		Drove	Toy Joy	Liked creative writing & wanted more	
33	Free fun in Austin.com	Destination	78727	No	No	Drove	None	Like- Something for Families	
34	Free fun in Austin.com	Chance	78707	N/A	Yes	Drove	Pipy Longstocking & Accordian Fest	N/A	
35	Email	Destination	78751	No	No	Scooter	Looking at condo	Pleasant & Appreciate place to sit and relax	
36	Walk by	Chance	78732	No	No	Drove	Walking Dogs, Visit Capitol, meet friends for lunch	Beautiful, brightens up the alley, could be a great public space	
37	Sue Lambe & AIPP	Destination	78703	Yes	Yes	Drove	Lunch	It's great, want more.	
38	AAA	Destination	78746	Yes	No	Drove	Lunch	Fantastic! Exceeded Expectations	
39	Email	Destination	78705	Yes	No	Walk	No Plans. Lunch	Incorporate lights into boarded up bldgs to illuminate.	
40	Facebook	Destination	78751	No	No	Bike	Movie	"when you see something like this it changes your whole attitude in a positive way"	
41	KUT	Chance	78756	Yes		Walk	Lunch	Love to see more of it!	
42	DAA Social Media	N/A	78754	Yes	No	Walk	Working	"it's like a little kiss on the cheek" Maybe go a little deeper, more edgy, more alleys, etc	
43	Downtown Austin Blog	Destination	78701	No	Yes	Bike	Walk/Bike Around	Great Idea	
44	DAA	Destination	N/A	Yes	No	Walk from Office	Working	Hope city goes through with it for more places	
45	Word of Mouth	Destination	78701	Yes	Yes	Walk	Lunch	"It's silly" we should focus on the parks we have already	
46	City Council Agenda	Destination	78702	Yes	No	Walk	Forget the world	Got me to go into a space I otherwise wouldn't-safe & clean	
47	DAA Newsletter	Destination		Yes	No	Walk	On break from work	Love it, fun. Don't think people know that they are welcome, barricades and signage	
48	Walk by	Chance	N/A	Yes	No	Walk	Working	Love the concept. Rich history in alley. Might not be sustainable on a large scale without business involvement	
				Yes	No	Walk	Working	Reminds me of Joey Santori. Would like to see more	

20Ft Wide Survey Results									
How did you hear about 20ft Wide?	Was this event a destination or did you chance upon it?	Are you a resident or visitor?	Zipcode	Do you work downtown ?	Do you live downtown ?	How did you get to the event?	What else will you do while downtown?	Do you have any comments to share about the event?	
49	Works @ Austin Club							Is the art done? Like it built felt like there could be more art.	
50	Walking by	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	Walk	Working	He added something to the defunct electrical box- three black bats	
51	Facebook/Blog	Resident	78704	No	No	Walk	Coffee	When are you going to do this again?	
52	City Employee	Resident	78704	Yes	No	Drove	Coffee	Would love to utilize this space, a place to meet for appointments	
53	Here & There	Resident	N/A	Yes	No	Walk	Meetings/Lunch	The photos drew me to it. Great use of an unused street.	
54	512 Family	Resident	78703	No	Yes	Bus	Event at City Hall on way home	Interesting- Downtown needs more quiet places to hang out at lunch & after	
55	Fusebox	Resident	78704	No	No	Drove	Bus Ride	Cool! Glad you guys are doing this.	
56	Word of Mouth	Resident	78759	Yes	No	Long Board	Lunch	Great!	
57	Sister in law/ Facebook	Resident	78745	No	No	Drove	Fusebox Talk	This should be done more	
58	Chronicle	Resident	78703	No	No	Drove	Unknown	Should have more art in public spaces & love art commissioners	
59	Pecha Kucha- AAA	Resident	78746	No	No	Drove	Lunch	Fantastic/ Also went to Pecha Kucha	
60	Chronicle- AA Statesman	Resident	78746	Yes	No	Drove	Lunch	Fabulous use in urban space	
61	Heather Way	Resident	78733	No	No	Car	Lunch	Reclaiming an old alley that would have otherwise been a lost space made it fabulous!	
62	Friend	Resident	78748	No	No	Car	Eat, go to a few museums	Great idea! Great way to turn a space into something inhabitable for both old & young	
63	Friend	Visitor	14467	No	No	Car	N/A	I think its cool. Love the colors in the dead space. Wish it could stay up all the time	
								Would like to see the businesses, more projects to do and take home. Love the interactiveness and want to be involved in making.	



## Appendix C: Resources on Alleys

Alley Event Handbook and Alley Network Project: [www.alleynetworkproject.com](http://www.alleynetworkproject.com);  
<http://alleynetworkproject.com/what-weve-learned/activating-your-alley/>.

City of Austin, Downtown Austin Plan (Dec. 8, 2011):  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/downtownplan>

City of Austin, Green Alley Demonstration Project Website:  
<http://austintexas.gov/page/2012-demonstration-project>

City of Brisbane, Australia, Vibrant laneways program:  
<http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/planning-building/planning-guidelines-and-tools/urban-design-projects/vibrant-laneways-small-spaces/index.htm>.

City of Fort Collins, Downtown Alley Enhancement Project and Alleys Master Plan (Dec. 1, 2008): <http://www.downtownfortcollins.org/alleys.html>.

City of Melbourne, Arcades and Lanes Website:  
<http://www.thatsmelbourne.com.au/Gettingaroundthecity/walks/Pages/ArcadesandLanes.aspx>

City of Melbourne, Love Your Laneway Project:  
<http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/ForResidents/StreetCleaningandGraffiti/Pages/LoveYourLaneway.aspx>

City of Perth, Australia, Forgotten Spaces—Revitalizing Perth’s Laneways Initiative:  
<http://www.perth.wa.gov.au/planning-development/city-initiatives/city-laneways-enhancement-and-forgotten-spaces>

City of San Francisco, Living Alleys Project: <http://www.sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/reclaiming-roadway-space/living-alleys/>.

City of Seattle, Clear Alley Program: <http://seattlecap.wm.com>.

City of Sydney, Australia, “Policy for the Management of Laneways in Central Sydney”:  
[http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/120375/ManagementOfLaneways.pdf](http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/120375/ManagementOfLaneways.pdf)

City of Sydney, Australia, finegrain matching grants program:  
<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/business/business-support/grants-and-sponsorship/finegrain-matching-grants>

Mary Fialko and Jennifer Hampton, Activating Alleys for a Lively City:  
<http://greenfutures.washington.edu/publications.php>.

Joann Greco, "Why Alleys Deserve more Attention," Atlantic Cities: (Feb. 16, 2013):  
<http://m.theatlanticcities.com/design/2012/02/why-alleys-deserve-your-attention/1249/>

Sara M. Hammerschmidt, "New Life for Downtown Alleys: Creating an Open Space Network in Downtown Austin, Texas," Master's Report for Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning, University of Texas at Austin (May 2009):  
[http://soa.utexas.edu/work/publicspace/home/SaraHammerschmidt\\_MastersReport\\_May09.pdf](http://soa.utexas.edu/work/publicspace/home/SaraHammerschmidt_MastersReport_May09.pdf)

## End Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> See Appendix A for a list of the workgroup members and other project partners.
- <sup>ii</sup> Sara Hammerschmidt, in her UT master's thesis, chronicles the history of Austin's downtown alleys up to 2009". Sara M. Hammerschmidt, "New Life for Downtown Alleys: Creating an Open Space Network in Downtown Austin, Texas," Master's Report for Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning, University of Texas at Austin (May 2009), available at [http://soa.utexas.edu/work/publicspace/home/SaraHammerschmidt\\_MastersReport\\_May09.pdf](http://soa.utexas.edu/work/publicspace/home/SaraHammerschmidt_MastersReport_May09.pdf).
- <sup>iii</sup> City of Austin, Downtown Austin Plan (Dec. 8, 2011), p. 9, <http://www.austintexas.gov/downtownplan>.
- <sup>iv</sup> Hammerschmidt, *supra*, p. 36.
- <sup>v</sup> Hammerschmidt, *supra*, p. 41.
- <sup>vi</sup> "Renovation of Downtown Alley Proposed," *Daily Texan* (circa 1970s; exact date of article unknown).
- <sup>vii</sup> Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*, Policy 3.1, at 24.
- <sup>viii</sup> Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*, pp. 134, 146.
- <sup>ix</sup> Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*, TP-1.3, pp. 146-47.
- <sup>x</sup> Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*, p. 2.
- <sup>xi</sup> Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*, pp. 36, 115.
- <sup>xii</sup> Because of Fox News's use of the northern section of the alley for entering the station's parking lot, the workgroup limited the activation project to the southern half of the alley.
- <sup>xiii</sup> A more complete list of partners and participants for 20ft Wide can be found in Appendix A.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Chris Jackson, "The Biggest Party Ever in Alley Number 111," *Urban Land Magazine* (Aug. 2013), <http://urbanland.uli.org/Articles/2013/Aug/JacksonAlleys>.
- <sup>xv</sup> See Appendix B for a copy of the survey instrument.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Joy Diaz, "Can the Lowly Alleyway Transform Downtown Austin?" *KUT News* (Mar. 18, 2013).
- <sup>xvii</sup> Jan Buchholz, "Here's an art demo up your alley," *Austin Business Journal* (Apr. 18, 2013), available at <http://www.bizjournals.com/austin/blog/creative/2013/04/heres-an-art-demo-thats-up-your-alley.html?page=all>.
- <sup>xviii</sup> "Austin's Alleys Could Come Become the Next Art Spot," *KEYE TV* (Apr. 12, 2013), available at <http://www.keyetv.com/news/features/waste-local/stories/austins-alleys-could-come-next-art-spot-69.shtml>.
- <sup>xix</sup> Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*, p. 119.
- <sup>xx</sup> Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*, p. 119.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*, p. 119.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> See Downtown Austin Plan, *supra*, p. 91.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> City of Austin, "Green Alley Demonstration Project," <http://austintexas.gov/page/2012-demonstration-project>.
- <sup>xxv</sup> For an excellent example, see Mary Fialko and Jennifer Hampton, *Activating Alleys for a Lively City*, p. 28-29, <http://greenfutures.washington.edu/publications.php>.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Hammerschmidt, *supra*, p. 62-66.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> City of Fort Collins, Downtown Alley Enhancement Project and Alleys Master Plan (Dec. 1, 2008): <http://www.downtownfortcollins.org/alleys.html>.

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<sup>xxviii</sup> For a brief overview of Melbourne’s laneways, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lanes\\_and\\_arcades\\_of\\_Melbourne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lanes_and_arcades_of_Melbourne).

<sup>xxix</sup> City of Melbourne, “Love Your Laneway,” <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/ForResidents/StreetCleaningandGraffiti/Pages/LoveYourLaneway.aspx>.

<sup>xxx</sup> City of San Francisco Planning Department, “San Francisco’s Alleys,” <http://www.sf-planning.org/modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=1961>; and City of San Francisco, “Living Alleys Project,” <http://www.sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/reclaiming-roadway-space/living-alleys/>.

<sup>xxxi</sup> City of Sydney, “Laneway Art Program,” <http://www.cityartsydney.com.au/cityart/projects/lanewayart/>.

<sup>xxxii</sup> City of Sydney, “Central Sydney Laneways,” <http://sydneyyoursay.com.au/laneways>; City of Sydney, Fine Grain Matching Grant Program, <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/business/business-support/grants-and-sponsorship/finegrain-matching-grants>.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> City of Brisbane, Australia, “Vibrant laneways program,” <http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/planning-building/planning-guidelines-and-tools/urban-design-projects/vibrant-laneways-small-spaces/index.htm>.  
<http://www.planning.org.au/documents/item/3253>

<sup>xxxiv</sup> City of Perth, Australia, “Forgotten Spaces—Revitalizing Perth’s Laneways Initiative,” <http://www.perth.wa.gov.au/planning-development/city-initiatives/city-laneways-enhancement-and-forgotten-spaces>.

<sup>xxxv</sup> City of Seattle, “Clear Alleys Program,” <http://seattlecap.wm.com>.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> City of Seattle, “Street Vacations,” <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/streetvacations.htm>.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> For an image of the gates in Maiden Alley, see <http://sanfrancisco.about.com/od/photogalleries/ig/Photo-Tour--Barbary-Coast/Maiden-Lane.htm>.