

1 **Version 3**

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3 **RESOLUTION NO.**

4 **WHEREAS**, Sixth Street, once referred to as Pecan Street, was a center of
5 Downtown commerce and offered an array of services and businesses; and

6 **WHEREAS**, bars and nighttime music venues currently dominate the uses on
7 historic Sixth Street; and

8 **WHEREAS**, especially on weekend evenings, Sixth Street generates large crowds
9 and much activity; and

10 **WHEREAS**, the area is known to attract and encourage certain at-risk practices,
11 such as excessive binge drinking, which has contributed to the perception of an unsafe
12 and volatile environment; and

13 **WHEREAS**, while the wide swathe of empty space created by weekend street
14 closures provides opportunities for pedestrians to walk without interacting with vehicles,
15 it also provides ample space and opportunity for less positive activity, including fighting
16 and alcohol-fueled violence; and

17 **WHEREAS**, Austin Police Department regularly takes possession of illegal guns
18 among individuals present along Sixth Street on weekend evenings; and

19 **WHEREAS**, in recent months, Sixth Street has been the site of multiple fatal
20 shootings, including a mass shooting on June 12, 2021, that left one individual dead and
21 others seriously wounded; and

22 **WHEREAS**, in the last decade, several studies conducted by non-city entities have
23 recommended changes that could make Sixth Street safer for all who live, work, and
24 recreate there, though these reports were apparently never shared with the full City
25 Council; and

26 **WHEREAS**, in 2009, the Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI) facilitated a
27 process with more than 60 stakeholders from the Downtown faith community, hotels,

28 area colleges and universities, South by Southwest, the real estate industry, and including
29 city staff from the Austin Police Department, Emergency Medical Services, Planning,
30 Solid Waste Services, law, and other departments; and

31 **WHEREAS,** the resulting report, “Managing the Nighttime Economy,”
32 recommended specific short- and long-term strategies for improving perceptions of
33 safety, creating “visible systems of order,” and achieving other goals essential to
34 maintaining and enhancing a thriving Downtown historic district; and

35 **WHEREAS,** while City Council or staff have initiated and implemented several
36 action items, such as the installation of public restrooms and a Downtown wayfinding
37 system, other major recommendations related to the proposed analysis and action related
38 to the weekend street closure, better lighting, additional placemaking, and others have
39 not been pursued at all or to their fullest extent; and

40 **WHEREAS,** in 2013, SXSW commissioned an outside expert on crowd science
41 to facilitate roundtable conversations with social service providers, business owners and
42 operators, event producers, and City of Austin staff with the purpose of identifying
43 challenges, such as underage drinking and the perception of a lack of safety, in the Sixth
44 Street Historic and Entertainment District; and

45 **WHEREAS,** the resulting report “Austin 6th Street SXSW Report and Analysis”
46 concluded that the area has a reputation for underage drinking and overcrowding, that a
47 majority of the 6th Street crowd are individuals under the age of 21, and that the
48 appropriate entities should take steps to address the perceived lack of safety and the high
49 concentration of bars; and

50 **WHEREAS,** in 2014, Council approved Resolution No. 20140925-081, directing
51 the City Manager to engage relevant stakeholders and City departments to ensure the City
52 is creating a safe and vibrant environment in our Downtown entertainment districts, to
53 examine opportunities and challenges related to achieving that goal, and to report back
54 to Council with any necessary recommended Code changes; and

55 **WHEREAS**, Resolution No. 20140925-081 directed the Manager to explore
56 creating an entertainment license, identifying a lead department to manage the nightlife
57 economy, proposing a timeline for lighting upgrades, and other strategies; and

58 **WHEREAS**, in 2015, city staff issued a responsive memorandum indicating that
59 they had analyzed and did recommend many of these initiatives including the
60 entertainment license; however, at least some of those slated for action – such as the 2016
61 Austin Nightlife Initiative -- did not move forward; and

62 **WHEREAS**, in 2015, the Economic Development Department again
63 recommended to the Economic Opportunity Committee the creation of an Entertainment
64 License to support consistent enforcement of the sound ordinance, safety and security
65 provisions; and

66 **WHEREAS**, most key findings from the studies and stakeholder processes have
67 not yet been fully addressed nor the proposals tested and implemented; and

68 **WHEREAS**, city staff have continued to engage with their peers in other cities to
69 keep abreast of best practices with regard to management nightlife economies and
70 enhancement of historic and entertainment districts; and

71 **WHEREAS**, recent acts of violence highlight the urgency of taking immediate
72 steps to curb violence in this area of Downtown;

73 **WHEREAS**, complex factors have led to escalating incidents of gun violence and,
74 accordingly, policy solutions must be multi-faceted; and

75 **WHEREAS**, the Council has taken important steps to address gun violence
76 through community-based prevention and intervention strategies, such as the creation of
77 the Office of Violence Prevention, the seizure of illegal firearms, safe gun storage
78 education, and the support of other critical legislation that could prevent access to
79 firearms by domestic abusers, among other vital efforts; and

80 **WHEREAS**, the City should also implement physical changes and increased
81 expectations and regulations along Sixth Street to increase the success of such anti-
82 violence efforts; and **NOW, THEREFORE:**

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

84 The City Council supports implementing a more comprehensive strategy toward
85 Sixth Street that maximizes its assets, embraces new opportunities, and ensures a safer
86 environment for all. This strategy needs to be multi-faceted and shall build on the
87 previous stakeholder processes and consultant reports. Council’s intent may be further
88 articulated in subsequent Council resolutions.

89 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

90 The City Council directs the City Manager to take the following immediate actions
91 by August 30, 2021:

- 92 1. create an interdepartmental team led by the Entertainment Services Group and with
93 representation from – at a minimum – the Austin Police Department, Austin
94 Transportation Department, Austin Energy, Austin Fire Department, Austin/Travis
95 County Emergency Medical Services, Austin Code, and the Historic Preservation
96 Office;
- 97 2. upgrade existing lighting, if necessary, and use temporary lighting to provide
98 dramatically brighter spaces along the Sixth Street corridor;
- 99 3. explore and pilot options such as café seating, water barriers, and other “pop up”
100 efforts for temporarily dedicating wider walkways for patrons to move between
101 establishments and eliminating the space where people gather during the weekend
102 closures by using the street for other purposes;
- 103 4. determine the extent to which earlier findings-assertions about underage presence
104 on Sixth Street and underage drinking remain true today;

5. briefly list which recommendations noted in the July 17, 2015, staff memo “Response to Resolution No. 20140925-081 – Downtown Entertainment Districts” and from the two consultant reports have been implemented;

6. engage with peer cities to identify best practices in entertainment district planning and management and provide additional recommendations to Council based on that research;

7. explore the feasibility of creating a dedicated EMS presence during weekend nights with personnel using specialized vehicles for rapid response, treatment, and extrication; and

~~6. and~~

7.8. any other relevant actions deemed to be appropriate by the City Manager.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council directs the City Manager – through the interdepartmental team -
- to take the following actions by September 30, 2021:

1. suggest a process and program for entertainment licenses that includes safety training for staff and increased coordination and communication with public safety officers; and
2. coordinate with the Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission (TABC) on additional strategies for curbing underage drinking and potentially limiting the presence of underage Austinites on Sixth Street during weekend evenings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council directs the City Manager – through the interdepartmental team -
- to take the following actions and report to Council on the results by October 30, 2021:

1. initiate development of a nightlife management plan;

4.2. review plan for responding to mass casualties;

130 2.3. analyze Sixth Street weekend closures and, if the team believes changes
131 would be beneficial, develop a list of measures that would need to be met for Sixth
132 Street to be re-opened and propose a corresponding timeline; and
133 4. engage with property owners to discuss land use regulations along Sixth Street to
134 determine whether changes might foster more diverse uses along this historic
135 corridor.

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138 **ADOPTED:** _____, 2021 **ATTEST:** _____

139 Jannette S. Goodall
140 City Clerk