




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Chief Joseph Chacon, Austin Police Department 

THROUGH: Chief Bruce Mills, Interim Assistant City Manager

DATE: May 9, 2023

SUBJECT: Safer Sixth Street Resolutions (CIUR 2660 & 2519)


The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information related to the Safer Sixth Street Resolutions.

The Austin Police Department and Development Services Department are working collaboratively with stakeholders to advance public safety in the downtown area. We purchased 13 additional HALO cameras (the less expensive option discussed with the May 2022 memo) and they are now operational. With regard to hand-held metal detector wands and other types of safety technology, the Department does not plan to make such purchases.

We have attached below periodic updates provided 2021 – present in response to CIUR 2660 and 2519.



TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Joseph Chacon, Austin Police Department Chief 
Jose Roig, Interim Development Services Director

DATE: March 2, 2023

SUBJECT: Safer 6th Street Initiative (Resolution No. 20220303-061)

The purpose of this memo is to provide a response on action items related to the Safer 6th Street resolution.

Background

Council Resolution No. [20210729-175](#) established City Council support for implementing a more comprehensive strategy toward 6th Street that maximizes its assets, embraces new opportunities, and ensures a safer environment for all, and established that the strategy needs to be multi-faceted and build on previous stakeholder processes and consultant reports. The resolution outlined actions to be taken, and for staff to report to Council on the results.

City staff sent a [Memo to Mayor and Council](#) on December 27, 2021 with responses on action items related to the Safer 6th Street resolution

Council Resolution No. [20220303-061](#) referenced the staff memo including recommendations for next steps and outlined further actions to be taken. The resolution outlined several actions.

City staff sent [Memo to Mayor and Council](#) on May 18, 2022 with an initial response on action items.

Below is a response to each of the remaining action items from the resolution:

Response to Action Items

- **Action:** The City Council supports staff's proposed "Pilot Program 1" that includes activations for seating, dining, and other activities during 6th Street closures which occur on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. The City Manager is directed to finalize program criteria, requirements, and the application process and to implement this program; and to bring to Council an ordinance to waive fees associated with this pilot program.

Response: The program criteria, requirements and application process have been developed by staff as directed. The program is only open to properties on the 200 and 500 blocks of East 6th Street and initial feedback from those property and business owners is that there is limited benefit, and no interest in taking advantage of this pilot program at this time. Staff will continue to work with each property individually, and implementation of a pilot will take place in the future if there is interest from the property or business owner(s). An ordinance to waive fees for the pilot program is not necessary, as no fees will be assessed during the pilot, and the pilot program will be utilized to evaluate if fees are warranted and will be required for a regular program.

- **Action:** The City Council endorses City staff's recommendation that any future redesign or rebuild of 6th Street or the streetscape include dedicated pedestrian lighting solutions. The City Manager is directed to formalize this intent as necessary and to provide feedback by June 1, 2022, as to whether temporary lighting could achieve a similar effect in the interim.

Response: While temporary lighting cannot achieve all the benefits of permanent pedestrian lighting solutions, staff believes that additional security lighting on establishment buildings facing the sidewalk and street can help with safety and security, especially if they are turned on at closing time. Staff intends to encourage establishments to install security lighting by including it in the training program as a best practice.

- **Action:** The City Manager shall initiate a lighting study to identify gaps in the street light network throughout the 6th Street District with work to be completed before Council embarks on Fiscal Year 2023 budget deliberations.

Response: Austin Energy completed a lighting study which shows that there is sufficient lighting along the 6th St. roadway and no additional streetlights or upgrades are required. The streetlights along the Historic 6th Street Entertainment District portion of 6th Street are LED lights, have a higher-than-normal output (400W equivalent, whereas other lights along 6th St. are 250W equivalent), and are on a schedule to increase to full output when late night establishments are closing and then to dim to reduce output for normal roadway lighting conditions. In addition, after the lighting study the Austin Energy Vegetation Management Group completed tree trimming along this section of 6th Street. The tree trimming further increased the illuminance past the study results and Austin Energy standards.

- **Action:** The City Manager is directed to continue working with all 6th Street bar owners and stakeholders to encourage written safety plans, training for door staff, increased communication with the Austin Police Department, peer-to-peer communication, and codes of conduct that outline expected standards of behavior for staff and patrons, which includes a plan to prioritize the prevention of underage drinking.

Response: Staff is working with Historic 6th Street property and business owners to create a nightlife establishment training program. This program is primarily aimed at creating better partnerships with operators and enhancing safety and harm reduction, however it can also contribute to bringing more organization to the public space and diversifying activities. The specific goals of the program are to enhance establishment-operating standards around safety and harm reduction, provide training and support to operators, recognize responsible operators, build a coalition of businesses that work together and hold each other accountable. Additional goals are to increase establishments' coordination and communication with APD, City and State Departments and with each other. With an approach based on building relationships and trust, a focus on prevention, guidance, training, and support, we believe this program can improve safety, and reduce alcohol-related violence and harm. Active Attack training sessions have occurred with additional training to occur related to other facets of this action item.

- **Action:** To encourage a broader array of uses in the 6th Street area, the City Manager shall propose a pilot program by June 1, 2022, that provides incentives or loans to owners of historic buildings in the 6th Street District who seek to add kitchens. The City Manager shall also recommend possible funding sources for such a program, including whether the 6th Street Public Improvement District (PID) could be a viable funding source for these incentives or loans.

Response: Staff recommends that existing City of Austin or private loan programs be utilized for owners of historic buildings in the 6th Street District that seek to add kitchens. The City of Austin [Family Business Loan Program](#) can be used for renovations to add kitchens. Utilizing the City of Austin's relationships with banks or Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI's) are additional options for loans. 6th Street Public Improvement District (PID) funds would not be an eligible use for private business kitchen additions as this funding may only be used for public improvements. However, the Public Improvement District could help market loan programs to its members.

- **Action:** The City Manager shall initiate a new historic survey of the 6th Street District that identifies contributing and non-contributing properties and provides guidance on how non-contributing properties could be redeveloped in a manner that maintains the cohesiveness and integrity of the historic district.

Response: The Housing and Planning Department has added the historic survey to their workplan.

- **Action:** The City Manager shall work collaboratively with the Downtown Austin Alliance to mutually contribute and maintain public realm improvements aimed at creating a safer and more family-friendly atmosphere in the 6th Street District, including such strategies as the reconstruction of East 6th Street, installation of decorative planters, public art and programming, the active storefront program, and a pilot program for alley activation and public market on Sabine Street. The City Manager shall report to Council on the progress of this collaboration by June 1, 2022. The City Manager is directed to bring an ordinance to Council to waive fees associated with these activations.

Response: City staff is continuing to partner with the Downtown Austin Alliance on all aspects of the Safer 6th Street Initiative as well as the streetscape improvements and activations. Staff will bring an ordinance to waive fees when the Downtown Austin Alliance is ready to implement programming and activations.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Block, Entertainment Services Manager, at 512-974-7966 or Brian.Block@austintexas.gov.

cc: Jesus Garza, Interim City Manager
Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager
Bruce Mills, Interim Assistant City Manager
Robert Goode, Interim Assistant City Manager
Joel G. Baker, Austin Fire Chief
Robert Luckritz, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services Chief
Richard Mendoza, Interim Austin Transportation Department Director
Jacqueline Sargent, Austin Energy General Manager
Rosie Truelove, Housing and Planning Department Director



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Bruce Mills, Interim Assistant City Manager

FROM: Chief Robert Luckritz, Emergency Medical Services

DATE: May 8, 2023

SUBJECT: Staff Update - EMS Pilot in Rainey Street Historic District

This memorandum is to provide an update on the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) response to Resolution number [20230413-077](#) which directed the City Manager to provide an interim pedestrian safety plan for the Rainey Street Historic District and provide a report to Council regarding the status of this directive by April 20, 2023. A previous update with a plan was provided in a [memorandum](#) of April 20, 2023. Exploration of the capacity to have EMS stationed at the Rainey Street Trailhead, along with detailing hours and days when personnel would be deployed is responded to herein.

The EMS department is currently reviewing historical call volume and response times to begin a pilot program staffing EMS medics in the Rainey Street Historic District beginning this summer. Considerations for the pilot include staffing during peak periods of pedestrian traffic and using Special Response Units (SRUs) to facilitate access to patients.


Data from the pilot program will inform future allocation of resources with appropriate response equipment for the area. Should you have questions or need more information please contact me.

Cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Bruce Mills, Interim Assistant City Manager 

DATE: April 20, 2023

SUBJECT: **Staff Update: Interim Pedestrian Safety Plan for Rainey Street Historic District**

This memorandum is an update on Resolution [20230413-077](#) where the City Manager is directed to provide an interim pedestrian safety plan for the Rainey Street Historic District and provide a report to Council regarding the status of this directive by April 20, 2023.

A [memorandum](#) from March 7, 2023, outlined the immediate temporary infrastructure installation which serves as the interim pedestrian safety plan. Since March 7th the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) has installed temporary solar lighting, a temporary fence barrier, a gate at top of steps to lake access, installed signage, increased park ranger patrols and conducted multiple site visits to monitor light reliability. PARC, in collaboration with The Trail Conservancy, hired a consultant group to draft recommendations for permanent infrastructure safety improvements and hosted a nighttime consultant group trail walk inclusive of Austin Police Department (APD) representatives on April 17th. Additionally, a request for payment of overtime hours for Park Rangers has been approved by Human Resources to assist in providing more frequent patrols in the area.

The direction to place EMS personnel at the Rainey Street Trailhead is currently being explored. A staff update will be provided by May 8, 2023.



Should you have any questions or need more information, please contact Elise Renshaw by email at elise.renshaw@austintexas.gov.

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim Assistant City Manager
Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager
Chief Robert Luckritz, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services
Kimberly McNeeley, Parks and Recreation Department, Director



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Joseph Chacon, Austin Police Department Chief 
Denise Lucas, Development Services Director 

THROUGH: Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager

DATE: May 18, 2022

SUBJECT: Resolution Number 20220303-061 - Staff Response, Safer 6th Street

The purpose of this memo is to provide a response on action items related to the Safer 6th Street resolution.

Background

Council Resolution No. [20210729-175](#) established City Council support for implementing a more comprehensive strategy toward 6th Street that maximizes its assets, embraces new opportunities, and ensures a safer environment for all, and established that the strategy needs to be multi-faceted and build on previous stakeholder processes and consultant reports. The resolution outlined actions to be taken, and for staff to report to Council on the results.

City staff sent a [Memo to Mayor and Council](#) on December 27, 2021, with responses on action items related to the Safer 6th Street resolution.

Council Resolution No. [20220303-061](#) referenced the staff memo including recommendations for next steps and outlined further actions to be taken. This memorandum responds to the actions outlined in the resolution.

Action Items and Responses

Action: The City Council supports staff's proposed "Pilot Program 1" that includes activations for seating, dining, and other activities during 6th Street closures which occur on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. The City Manager is directed to finalize program criteria, requirements, and the application process and to implement this program by May 1, 2022; and to bring to Council an ordinance to waive fees associated with this pilot program.

Response: The requirements for participation in the pilot program have been finalized and the application process has been developed. The program criteria are being finalized and the program will be implemented in the coming weeks. An ordinance to waive fees for the pilot program is not necessary, as no fees will be assessed during the pilot, and the pilot program will be utilized to evaluate if fees are warranted and will be required for a regular program.

Action: The City Manager is directed to provide Council with regular written updates on the planning currently underway to create a dedicated Emergency Medical Services presence and staging area on 6th Street that will allow for safer and faster treatment and extrication of individuals needing medical attention. The City Manager shall first report back to Council no later than May 1, 2022.

Response: A staging area has been created in the 600 block of Neches following consultation and assistance from ATD. APD, ATCEMS, and AFD can use this area to stage personnel and/or equipment for both planned and no-notice events. ATCEMS is also in the process of procuring new equipment funded as part of the FY22 budget to provide additional rapid patient care capabilities.

Action: By May 1, 2022, the City Manager shall provide Council with information about previous City-sponsored gun buyback programs (total costs and number of weapons obtained). The City Manager shall also provide Council with a recommendation as to whether or not the City should establish a new gun buyback program and to provide information about potential funding sources should a new gun buyback program be recommended.

Response: The Austin Police Department has previously held two gun buyback programs. The first was held in 2010 and the second in 2011. They allowed citizens to turn in weapons without showing identification and in return VISA gift cards were issued. Funding was provided by private donations from the Greater Austin Crime Commission, and a person would receive a \$100 gift card for each handgun or rifle, and a \$200 gift card for each assault rifle. For the first event, \$30,000 in gift cards was distributed, and \$40,000 was distributed in the second. The one-day events collected 340 weapons in the first buyback, and 396 in the second. Most of the firearms received were unwanted guns that were gifted or bequeathed by will. The main goals of the program were to keep unwanted firearms off the street and help families that do not know what to do with unwanted firearms in their home. There are also individuals in the parking lot offering more money to buy the guns than the program.

In 2020 the Austin Police Department instated a “no questions asked” gun surrender program where citizens could safely surrender unwanted firearms and ammunition during quarterly events hosted at the Robert T. Martinez Central East Substation. The Department suspended the events on September 22, 2020 due to the pandemic. Citizens that wanted to surrender a firearm outside of the quarterly events could dial 3-1-1 and request an officer to be sent to their location to retrieve it. Sixty-five firearms and more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition were surrendered during the 1st quarterly event prior to the program being suspended. Effectiveness of gun buyback program depends on the goals of the program, which should be defined. If the goal of a buyback is aligned with the belief that any gun turned in is beneficial (examples: reduction in numbers, reduced access, community outreach and education about gun safety or gun violence), then gun buy backs can be viewed as effective. However, If the goal is to reduce gun violence and associated crime, gun buy backs are viewed as ineffective, as research suggests that firearms turned in by the public are the least likely to be associated with gun-related crimes and violence, and no empirical research has shown significant changes in gun-related crimes due to these programs.

Based on research examined for this resolution buyback or surrender programs do not yield productive numbers in reducing gun related incidents. The Austin Police Department does not recommend these programs.

Action: By May 1, 2022, the City Manager shall provide Council with recommendations related to the possibility of installing more HALO (High Activity Location Observation) cameras throughout the 6th Street area. If the Manager recommends installing additional cameras, he shall provide estimated costs and possible funding sources.

Response: Currently there are 47 cameras as part of the HALO system in the downtown entertainment district. The Police Technology Unit worked in conjunction with the Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) and the Downtown Area Command (DTAC) to compile a list of additional camera sites that would greatly assist and accomplish the City's goal of promoting safety and security within the downtown entertainment district. This collaboration identified the need for 13 additional cameras. Police Technology worked with Motorola Solutions to develop two options for enhancing the HALO system's capabilities.

Option One: \$898,187

Option one is the complete update of the current HALO system (to include the Rundberg area cameras) with all new Motorola cameras and a dedicated broadband network. This system includes 67 pan/tilt/zoom cameras and three fixed cameras. The addition of this complete update would allow for an easier and lower cost transition as the RTCC is moved out of the Main Headquarters, and into the Austin Regional Intelligence Center (ARIC) in the future.

Option Two: \$193,000

Option two is simply the addition of the 13 cameras to the existing HALO system. This does not include a dedicated broadband network and does not address the need to move to the RTCC out of the Main Headquarters building in the future.

Recognizing the need to install additional cameras now, plus knowing the RTCC will be required to relocate when the Main Headquarters is moved, Police Technology recommends option one. While option one carries a significantly higher price tag than option two, the cost of relocation will only continue to increase in the 4-5 years it will take to design and build a new Headquarters. Combining the update of the HALO system to enhance downtown public safety with the move of the RTCC provides an increased value and financial savings in the future.

Possible funding sources for the HALO System include City of Austin general fund and exploring grant funding.

Action: The City Council desires to take a strong stance against establishments with records of repeated violent incidents taking place among their customers. Within the next 45 days, the City Council requests information about legal options that may be available to the City to address establishments with such records. This information should address existing or proposed regulatory options considered or proposed by other cities, such as Houston.

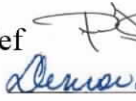
Response: The Law Department provided information during an April 5, 2022, executive session and provided a legal memo related to the request.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Block, Entertainment Services Manager, at 512-974-7966 or Brian.Block@austintexas.gov.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager
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Jacqueline Sargent, Austin Energy General Manager
Rosie Truelove, Housing and Planning Department Director



TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Joseph Chacon, Austin Police Department Chief
Denise Lucas, Development Services Director 

DATE: December 27, 2021

SUBJECT: Safer 6th Street Initiative (Resolution No. 20210729-175)

The purpose of this memo is to provide a response on action items related to the Safer 6th Street resolution.

Background

Council Resolution No. [20210729-175](#) established City Council support for implementing a more comprehensive strategy toward 6th Street that maximizes its assets, embraces new opportunities, and ensures a safer environment for all, and established that the strategy needs to be multi-faceted and build on previous stakeholder processes and consultant reports. The resolution outlined actions to be taken, and for staff to report to Council on the results. Below is the response on each action item.

Response to Action Items

- **Action #1:** Create an interdepartmental team led by the Entertainment Services Group and with representation from – at a minimum – the Austin Police Department, Austin Transportation Department, Austin Energy, Austin Fire Department, Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services, Austin Code, and the Historic Preservation Office.

Response: The interdepartmental team was created, held their kick-off meeting on August 16, 2021, and continued to meet to carry out the action items in the resolution.

- **Action #2:** Use temporary lighting and upgrade existing lighting if necessary to provide dramatically brighter spaces along the 6th Street corridor.

Response: The interdepartmental team identified locations that need additional lighting as well as priority areas for lighting. For context, 6th Street has decorative light poles, and the north-south side streets and alleys have traditional street light poles. The decorative poles on 6th Street had previously been upgraded to LED and optimized. The locations identified by the team for additional lighting are the north-south side streets and alleys. Austin Energy crews went through the 6th Street District to assess and perform maintenance on the existing traditional street lighting poles. Within the district crews replaced all of the old style high pressure sodium fixtures with LED. In all, AE replaced 64 heads of which approximately 10% were not working.

Next Steps:

- Conduct a lighting study to assess if there are gaps in the street light network in the district. Requests for new street light poles to fill any identified gaps will require funding and need to be added to Austin Energy's priority list for installs.
- Street light poles in the alleys are limited. There is very little room in the alleys for poles, existing poles typically get removed for new construction that extends to the lot line, and Austin Energy is not installing new poles in the alleys. The team is going to begin contacting property owners to encourage the installation of lighting from their buildings facing the alley and recommends that this practice of encouraging property owners to light the alleys from their buildings continue into the future.
- The team believes that the best solution for lighting of high-volume pedestrian areas is lighting specifically designed for pedestrians rather than the street light network. The team recommends that any future redesign or rebuild of the street or streetscape include dedicated pedestrian lighting solutions.
- **Action #3:** Explore and pilot options such as café seating, water barriers, and other “pop up” efforts for temporarily dedicating wider walkways for patrons to move between establishments and eliminating the space where people gather during the weekend closures by using the street for other purposes

Response: The interdepartmental team recommends the creation of pilot programs that allow for the installation of seating, dining, and small-scale activations in the right of way on the 200, 500, 600 & 700 blocks of 6th Street. The goal of the programs is to add more diverse uses, bring a wider demographic to the 6th Street District and begin to help diversify and change the character of the street.

Pilot Program 1: Activations during 6th Street closure on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

- Allow business to apply to the City to utilize a designated space on the sidewalk, parking lane and a portion of the travel lane on the 200 & 500 blocks of 6th Street for seating, dining and other small-scale activations (music, performance, art installation etc.).
 - A group of businesses or an association could also apply to curate an activation or create a combined seating area.
- Furnishings would have to be moved into and out of the space at designated times each weekend night during the road closure.
- Simple and minimal visual boundary marker envisioned to designate space.
- Quick and easy application process is envisioned.

Next Steps:

- Staff will finalize program criteria, requirements, and application process and implement the program.

Pilot Program 2: Activations not confined to 6th Street closure on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

- Allow business to utilize sidewalk and parking lane space for seating, dining and activations on the 200, 500, 600 & 700 blocks of 6th Street and Sabine Street by creating a pilot program customized for the 6th Street District
 - A program similar to the existing Shop the Block pilot, but customized for 6th Street is envisioned.
 - An individual business could apply, or a group of businesses or an association could also apply to create a combined seating area or curate an activation.

Next Steps:

- Determine customizations needed for the 6th Street District including allowable hours, uses and applicants, and seek council authorization to create a new pilot program.
- **Action #4:** Determine the extent to which earlier assertions about underage presence on 6th Street and underage drinking remain true today.

Response: APD has confirmed that the earlier assertions about underage presence in 6th Street and underage drinking remains true today.
- **Action #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.

Response: A brief list of recommendations that have been implemented was sent to Mayor and Council in a previous [update](#).
- **Action #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.

Response: The interdepartmental team has engaged with peer cities including Seattle, San Francisco, New York, Orlando, Las Vegas, Arlington, VA and Sydney, Australia.
- **Action #7:** Explore the feasibility of creating a dedicated EMS presence during weekend nights with personnel using specialized vehicles for rapid response, treatment, and extrication.

Response: Planning is already underway by APD, AFD and EMS to create a dedicated presence and staging area on 6th Street. This strategy will allow EMS and Fire medics, accompanied by APD officers to enter areas that are not completely secured to get to, treat and extricate patients faster.
- **Action #8:** Suggest a process and program for entertainment licenses that includes safety training for staff and increased coordination and communication with public safety officers.

Response:

- The interdepartmental team suggests that an annual Entertainment Permit be required for Places of Assembly in the 6th Street district with operating hours after 12am. The permit should include a required safety plan and once approved must be adhered to by the permitted establishment. The safety plan will include details on the number of security personnel and training requirements, description of door policies, and establishment procedures (including but not limited to): preventing serving minors and overserving; handling incidents and

emergencies; and addressing crowd control and preventing overcrowding. The team suggest that the City coordinate regular meetings with permit holders to increase coordination and communication with City departments, APD and each other, and that this forum be utilized for the City to provide training on a variety of topics such as fake ID detection, de-escalation techniques, active shooter training, and fire safety and prevention. The team suggests that permitted establishments should not require a separate operating permit from the Fire Department for fire prevention, or the Development Services Department for the use of sound equipment, and instead that these inspections, reviews and approvals take place as part of the issuance of the annual Entertainment Permit. The team suggests that the existing process and work flow for the Outdoor Music Venue permit be utilized for the new Entertainment Permit and that the Entertainment Services Group coordinate the process and serve as a liaison to permit holders.

- The team envisions utilizing the increased coordination, communication and relationships built through the entertainment permit as the foundation for creating a voluntary accreditation program in the future that recognizes responsible operators. With an approach based on building relationships and trust, and a focus on prevention, guidance, training, and support, the goals of the program would be to improve safety, reduce alcohol-related violence and harm, diversify activities, enhance peer to peer self-regulation, and improve establishment operating standards.
- **Action #9:** 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 6th Street during weekend evenings.

Response: TABC conducted an operation on September 2, 2021 to target underage drinkers and fake IDs. TABC and APD will be jointly conducting operations and initiatives as they have done in the past.

- **Action #10:** Initiate development of a nightlife management plan

Response: The creation of an interdepartmental team, a comprehensive approach to nightlife and entertainment district management, and work on strategies to create a district that is vibrant, well planned, diverse and safe has already laid a solid foundation for the development of a nightlife management plan for 6th Street. A sustained effort with departments and stakeholders working collaboratively on developing, refining and implementing this plan over the medium and long-term can help us achieve our goals for 6th Street and contribute to safety in a sustainable way. We are well underway with initiating the plan and several key goals and aspirations have emerged including:

- Improving Public Space Design: bring more organization to the space at night, provide wider and dedicated pedestrian pathways and infrastructure, improved pedestrian lighting, and better accessibility for public safety.
- Creating Better Partnerships with Bars: utilize written safety plans, training for door staff, increased communication with APD, standards of behavior for staff and patrons, and peer to peer communication and codes of conduct.

- Encouraging More Diverse Uses: include more daytime and early evening uses, more activities beyond just drinking, including live music, DJ, theatrical and comedy performance, sports, games, restaurants, and retail; and cultivate a district where visitors and all of the Austin community feel safe, comfortable and welcome, and are represented.
- **Action #11:** Review plan for responding to mass casualties.

Response: Planning is already underway by APD, AFD and EMS to create a dedicated presence and staging area on 6th Street. This strategy will allow EMS and Fire medics, accompanied by APD officers to enter areas that are not completely secured to get to, treat and extricate patients faster.

- **Action #12:** Analyze 6th Street weekend closures, and if the team believes changes would be beneficial, develop a list of measures that would need to be met for 6th Street to be re-opened and propose a corresponding timeline.

Response: With the current very high volume of pedestrians present, especially during peak late-night hours of 11:30pm-2:30am, and narrow sidewalks, the team does not believe re-opening 6th Street would be feasible. The team believes that more diverse uses in the 6th Street district with patrons visiting establishments during the daytime, evening, night and late-night hours could lead to 6th Street being visited by both more people and a more diverse demographic, but with those visits being more spread out instead of concentrated only during late-night hours. In addition, this could naturally lead to a staggered exit throughout the evening and reduce the very high volume of patrons exiting establishments all at the same time at 2:00am. If this type of change in uses and pattern of visits were realized, and if there were wider sidewalks installed on 6th Street in the future, the team believes this topic could be re-examined to see if the conditions make re-opening the street more feasible. While it is outside the direct scope of this item, we want to recognize that a redesign and rebuild of 6th Street could both add wider sidewalks (and other pedestrian infrastructure) and catalyze investment and changes in use in the adjacent historic buildings and thereby contribute to a more diverse mix of uses in the district.

- **Action #13:** Engage with property owners and impacted stakeholders to discuss land use regulations along 6th Street to determine whether changes might foster more diverse uses along this historic corridor.

Response: The interdepartmental team believes that a new historic survey of the 6th Street National Historic District with recommendations on which properties are contributing to the district and which properties are non-contributing, as well as potentially including guidance on how non-contributing properties could be redeveloped while maintaining the cohesiveness and integrity of the historic district, would provide more documented information and predictably to property owners, and could encourage investment in properties and lead to more diverse uses in the district. As was mentioned for the previous item, we want to recognize that a redesign and rebuild of 6th Street with the addition of pedestrian infrastructure could catalyze investment and changes in use in the adjacent buildings and thereby contribute to a more diverse mix of uses. Finally, impacted stakeholders suggested that a grant, loan or incentive program for remodeling historic buildings to include kitchens could lead to more investment and more diverse uses in those buildings.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Block, Entertainment Services Manager, at 512-974-7966 or Brian.Block@austintexas.gov.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager
Gina Fiandaca, Assistant City Manager
Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager
Joel G. Baker, Austin Fire Chief
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Rob Spillar, Austin Transportation Department Director
Jacqueline Sargent, Austin Energy General Manager
Rosie Truelove, Housing and Planning Department Director



TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Joseph Chacon, Austin Police Department Chief
Denise Lucas, Development Services Director

DATE: October 5, 2021

SUBJECT: Safer 6th Street Initiative (Resolution No. 20210729-175)

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on action items related to the Safer 6th Street resolution.

Background

Council Resolution No. [20210729-175](#) established City Council support for implementing a more comprehensive strategy toward 6th Street that maximizes its assets, embraces new opportunities, and ensures a safer environment for all, and establishes that the strategy needs to be multi-faceted and build on previous stakeholder processes and consultant reports. The resolution outlined several immediate actions be implemented by August 30, 2021 and additional actions by September 30, 2021.

Below is a preliminary update on the action items.

Update on Action Items

- **Action #1:** Create an interdepartmental team led by the Entertainment Services Group and with representation from – at a minimum – the Austin Police Department, Austin Transportation Department, Austin Energy (AE), Austin Fire Department, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Austin Code, and the Historic Preservation Office

Update: The interdepartmental team was created and held their kick-off meeting on August 16, 2021 and continues to meet to carry out the action items in the resolution.

- **Action #2:** Use temporary lighting and upgrade existing lighting if necessary to provide dramatically brighter spaces along the 6th Street corridor.

Update: The interdepartmental team identified locations that need additional lighting as well as priority areas for lighting. For context, 6th St has decorative light poles, and north-south side streets and alleys have traditional street light poles. The decorative poles on 6th St had previously been upgraded to LED and optimized. The locations identified by the team so far for additional lighting are north-south side streets and alleys. Austin Energy crews went through the 6th St District to assess and perform maintenance on the existing traditional street lighting poles. Within the district crews replaced all of the old style high pressure sodium fixtures with LED. In all AE replaced 64 heads of which approximately 10% were not working.

Next Steps:

- Conduct a lighting study to assess if there are gaps in the street light network in the district. Requests for new street light poles to fill any identified gaps will require funding and need to be added to Austin Energy's priority list for installs.
- Street light poles in the alleys are limited. There is very little room in the alleys for poles, existing poles typically get removed for new construction that extends to the lot line, and Austin Energy is not installing new poles in the alleys. The team is going to contact property owners to encourage the installation of lighting from their buildings facing the alley. The team will follow up on this item in October and will consider additional recommendations related to encouraging and incentivizing property owners to install alley facing lighting.
- The team believes that best solution for lighting of high-volume pedestrian areas may be lighting specifically designed for pedestrians rather than the street light network. The team will follow up on this item in October and will consider additional recommendations related to pedestrian lighting solutions.
- **Action #3:** Explore and pilot options such as café seating, water barriers, and other “pop up” efforts for temporarily dedicating wider walkways for patrons to move between establishments and eliminating the space where people gather during the weekend closures by using the street for other purposes

Update: The interdepartmental team has continued to evaluate how much space is needed for crowds to move around safely during the peak hours of 11pm-2:30am on a block-by-block basis and exploring pilot options for café seating, water barriers and other “pop up” efforts. The team is also continuing to engage with business and property owners in the district to identify locations where there is a desire for café seating and other pop-up efforts, and also to get feedback on options for pilots and the pros and cons of each from their perspective. The team needs additional time to finish the evaluation and stakeholder outreach process in the first half of October and develop a plan and timeline for implementing feasible pilot programs in the Fall.

- **Action #4:** Determine the extent to which earlier assertions about underage presence on 6th Street and underage drinking remain true today

Update: APD has confirmed that the earlier assertions about underage presence in 6th Street and underage drinking remains true today.

- **Action#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

Update: A brief list of recommendations that have been implemented is attached.

- **Action #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

Update: The interdepartmental team has engaged with peer cities including Seattle, San Francisco, New York, Orlando, Las Vegas, Arlington, VA and Sydney, Australia. These engagement efforts will continue in October and relevant recommendations will be included in the staff report to Council by October 30, 2021.

- **Action #7:** Explore the feasibility of creating a dedicated EMS presence during weekend nights with personnel using specialized vehicles for rapid response, treatment, and extrication

Update: Planning is already underway by APD, AFD and EMS to create a dedicated presence and staging area on 6th Street, which will also be the command post for a Rescue Task Force. This strategy will allow EMS and Fire medics, accompanied by APD officers to enter areas that are not completely secured to get to, treat and extricate patients faster.

- **Action #8:** Suggest a process and program for entertainment licenses that includes safety training for staff and increased coordination and communication with public safety officers

Update: The interdepartmental team has conducted research on other cities and jurisdictions and is discussing and evaluating options for an entertainment license. The team is also engaging with business owners in the district get feedback on options and pros and cons of each from their perspective. The team needs additional time to finish the evaluation and stakeholder outreach process in the first half of October and develop a recommendation for an entertainment license.

- **Action #9:** 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

Update: TABC conducted an operation on Sept 2, 2021 to target underage drinkers and fake IDs. Moving forward, TABC and APD will be jointly conducting operations and initiatives.

Staff continues collaborating to address the elements outlined in this resolution and looks forward to providing updates on progress. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Block, Entertainment Services Manager, at 512-974-7966, Brian.Block@austintexas.gov.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
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 Rosie Truelove, Housing and Planning Department Director

Attachment

**Staff Response to Resolution No 20140925-081 – Downtown Entertainment Districts
Update on Recommendations Implemented**

- **Recommendation #1:** Create an entertainment license to support consistent enforcement of the sound ordinance, safety and security provisions
 - **Update:** Not previously implemented. Underway now as part of the Safer 6th St resolution.
- **Recommendation #2:** Make information about conditional use permits and conditions of sound permits readily available to enforcement staff, such as through the use of Quick Response (QR) Codes
 - **Update:** Information on the conditions of sound permits is available in AMANDA, Teams and via an online web map for easy access by enforcement staff
- **Recommendation #3:** Expand Public Assembly Code Enforcement (PACE) enforcement authority
 - **Update:** Not previously implemented
- **Recommendation #4:** Identify the lead for the City's efforts to preserve or enhance the nightlife economy while ensuring a safe and vibrant environment
 - **Update:** The Music & Entertainment Division of the Economic Development Department formerly included the staff identified as the subject matter expert for this topic. The department assigned these staff to the newly created Entertainment Services Group in 2017 which was moved to the Development Services Department in 2021 for better alignment.
- **Recommendation #5:** Determine cost and timeline for improved street lighting
 - **Update:** The older streetlights (estimated to be about 54 lights) on 6th Street from IH 35 to Congress Ave were changed to LED early 2015. Materials for the new light head and a Remote Operations and Asset Management (ROAM) module cost about \$1,700. With labor it totaled about \$2,000 each installed, so approximately a \$108K expenditure to replace the lights to LED and to add ROAM nodes in 2015. The ROAM nodes allow Austin Energy to control, dim, and monitor the lights.
 - The lights are operated at normal streetlighting levels (as defined by the American National Standards Institute/Illuminating Engineering Society's "Recommended Practice for Lighting Roadways.") The normal level equates to 250 watts. In coordination with APD, the output is increased to the maximum capability, 400 watts, between the hours of 1 AM to 3 AM to provide additional lighting for patrons leaving the area when the bars close.
- **Recommendation #6:** Activate closed streets on weekends for performance artists and mobile food vendors
 - **Update:** Street performance is allowed without a permit and mobile food vending is allowed and currently takes place on 6th Street through the City's mobile food vending permit process. No dedicated program or pilot has been implemented to curate these activities.
- **Recommendation #7:** Open City garages for nighttime use
 - **Update:** The Affordable Parking Program is a City of Austin and Downtown Austin Alliance initiative aimed at reducing economic barriers for Austin community members to access downtown. Austin service and entertainment industry employees who work downtown can access park options at affordable monthly rates as early as 3 p.m. and stay as late as 7 a.m. during the week, and park up to 24 hours during the weekend, depending on the garage. More than two dozen City, State and private garages are open at night for this program
[View an interactive map of Affordable Parking Program garages.](#)