

ACTIVATION AWARD

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

Award Goals Include:

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

Project Description

The North Lamar International District Merchants Association (NLIMA) Activation Award was awarded in July 2018 upon successful formation on their merchants association. NLIMA expended their funding on a variety of major projects. This included leveraging funds for a major District-wide event, installing banners and flags, enhancing placemaking projects, developing and deploying a District Passport program, and creating a Community Garden Food Forest.

Night Market in the North Lamar International District

NLIMA partnered with the greater Austin Asian Chamber and AsianEats to host the first AsianEats Night Market in the District. NLIMA hosted the event at St. Vincent’s Thrift, and contributed \$1,600 in cost-sharing to the Night Market. This event was a major success, supporting businesses in the District with increased patronage and generating thousands of visitors. NLIMA is developing the Night Market into a regular event with the collaboration of the Chinatown Center.

Banners, Signage, and Placemaking Support

Funds went to support the installation of temporary banners, multilingual wayfinding signage, and landscaping in the District. These included the following:

- Six (6) welcoming gateway banners installed for three months at the CapMetro MetroRapid stations in the District



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- Fourteen (14) multilingual wayfinding signs helping visitors orient themselves in the District
- Replacement banners for a placemaking installation at Braker and North Lamar, and a banner reserve fund for the installation
- Extensive xeriscaped landscaping to augment the placemaking installation at Braker and North Lamar; this installation was created by NLIMA through their Souly Austin Placemaking Award
- Window decals for NLIMA members showing the logo of the District, to support district identity branding
- Feather flags for NLIMA members showing the logo of the District, to support district identity branding

Passports and Brochures

NLIMA used approximately \$5,500 of the Activation Award to support the creation of a Passport program and membership brochures to help unify and activate the District and support membership development. The Passport Program will be tied to promotional activities throughout the following year.

Community Garden Food Forest

NLIMA leveraged approximately \$2,000 of Activation Award funding to create a Food Forest style Community Garden in the District. This Food Forest includes opportunities for area businesses to sponsor trees and garden furniture, supporting strong connections between the merchant association, District merchants, and the surrounding neighborhoods.

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

Metrics
Number of District Businesses Engaged - 65+
Number of Partners - 17
Number of Creative Artists Engaged - 2
Media/News Hits - 7
Dollars Leveraged - \$18,622
Volunteer Hours - 413



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District Strategy Alignment:

- **Economic Growth 1 Objective 1.** Expand and leverage major events and district programming to attract patrons, visitors and celebrate the culture of the International District.
- **Economic Growth 3.2 Strategy 3.2.** Consistent signage throughout the District
- **Economic Growth 3.3 Strategy 3.3.** Website and Social Media providing robust information on district offerings and business information
- **Economic Growth 4 Objective 4.** Design, installation, and maintenance of multilingual district signs, banners, and wayfinding.
- **Economic Growth 5 Objective 5.** Design, install, and maintain District gateway elements
- **Music, Culture, & Arts 2 Objective 2.** Install public art on medians and at key entrances into the District.
- **Beautification & Aesthetics 1 Objective 1.** Develop a community garden in partnership with McBee Elementary
- **Beautification & Aesthetics 2.5 Strategy 2.5.** Signage: Explore opportunities to utilize signage to create continuity within the district and emphasize the District identity through gateway signage. District signage with maps can provide connections to visitors on foot, bicycle or by car. All signage can have multiple languages to enhance the district's multi-cultural influences and businesses. Stakeholders identified the north side of North Lamar and the east side of Braker Lane for gateway signage.

Challenges:

- Initial delay in project identification due to lack of board capacity
- Loss of momentum due to missed contractual deadlines
- Timeline adjustments due to securing contractors

Successes:

- Diversity and impact of projects district-wide
- Leveraging of grant funding to enhance projects
- Leveraging of existing district infrastructure to enhance place
- Successful marketing to encourage event and project awareness
- Increase in board capacity for project implementation
- Private property owner investment
- Long-term maintenance strategy development