

African American Cultural Heritage District Coalition Workshop #1

Date: Friday, November 15th, 2024

Time: 10:00pm-12:00pm

Location: African American Cultural Heritage Facility

Attendees: See Tables

City of Austin and Consultant Team

Name	Business/Organization
Juany Torres	City of Austin
Matt Schmidt	City of Austin
Donald Jackson	City of Austin
Zakcq Lockrem	Mend Collaborative
Michelle Bright	Mend Collaborative
Kennedy Rauh	Mend Collaborative

AACHD Stakeholders

Name	Email	Business/Organization
Harold McMillan	haroldmcmillan@eastaustincreatives.org	East Austin Creative Coalition
Carl Settles	carl@e4youth.org	E4 Youth, Pastor
Byron Davis	bc-byron.davis@austintexas.govd	Urban Renewal Board, Commissioner
Greg Smith	gsmith@austinrev.org	Austin Revitalization Authority
Daphne McDole	missmcdole@gmail.com	Director of Development Huston Tillotson, Six Square, Piano Teacher

1 | Desired Outcomes

The purpose of the first meetings of this group were established to achieve the following:

- Establish how we will work together over the next year
- Develop goals and desired outcomes for the process

- Develop a public engagement plan

Following the first two to three meetings, Mend Collaborative will be developing a full work plan and Public Engagement Plan for the process.

2 | Discussion Takeaways

Timeline

The following summarizes the discussion on the timeline presented:

1. **Timeline of activities related to the establishment of the District:** The consultant team developed a timeline of actions/activities taken by the City related to the establishment of the District. Participants noted that some of them had been deeply involved in these activities, but that there is an opportunity to update the timeline to incorporate different perspectives and a deeper understanding of the cultural and political events that have occurred in the establishment of the District. It was agreed the timeline would be sent out for review following the meeting

Discussion of Other Groups or Individuals to be Invited

A discussion was held regarding who else should be involved in these meetings. The following Groups and individuals were identified as potential participants in future meetings:

- Pam Benson Owens (Community Member)
- Huston-Tillotson (125 years old)
- Ebenezer Baptist Church (125 years old)
- Surrounding Neighborhood Associations
- African American Leadership Institute/Soul Citi, Heath Creech
- Equidad
- Black Leaders Collective
- Millenium Youth Complex, Michael Bryant
- Javier Wallace
- Harrison Eppright (City of Austin/Convention Center)
- Barbara Corbett (L.C. Anderson graduate, Campus Advisory Committee)
- Austin History Center/African American History Liaison
- Brenda Malik (City of Austin/APL)
- Sue Spears (Black Cemetery)
- Michael Emory
- David Porter

Case Study Discussion

Mend Collaborative presented a number of Districts throughout the country that could be examined to learn best practices. The following lists the Districts presented:

1. **5th Ward Cultural Arts District** - Houston, TX
2. **7th Street** - Oakland, CA
3. **Albina** - Portland, OR
4. **Jackson Ward** - Richmond, VA
5. **Rondo** - St. Paul, MN
6. **Sweet Auburn** - Atlanta, GA

The following summarizes the discussion of key aspects of the case studies that were mentioned as being of interest in the meeting:

1. **Highway Caps:** With the expansion of I-35, there is opportunity to explore other projects that have utilized these opportunities to receive land back, and expand opportunities to the other side of the interstate.
2. **Arts and History:** Arts and History have already been significant focuses in the District and could be further resourced.
3. **Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship:** Legacy businesses are important culture bearers in the neighborhood and expanding opportunities could be a strong focus of the District.
4. **Reparations, Right-of-Return & Down Payment Assistance:** Might be difficult to achieve in Texas. This can remain a goal, but should not be a priority.
5. **Americans for the Arts:** Coalition partners identified the Americans for the Arts organization for their research on districts and could be a resource for best practices and overall project examples.

Goals of the Cultural District

Discussion pivoted to establish goals for the cultural district. The following summarizes opportunities for the District:

1. **150 Year Celebration:** With the sesquicentennial celebrations in 2025 for Huston Tillotson University and Ebenezer Baptist Church, there is an opportunity to seek immediate impacts through street banners, concert events, markets, and more. This requires more funding for the district or collaboration within the District's community. City staff will begin coordination with departmental partners to seek solutions.
2. **District Placemaking:** Developing a wayfinding signage, banners, and more to highlight the historic and cultural features and organizations of the district. Signage would recognize and acknowledge what was here before. Developing

a consistent look through lighting improvements and fixtures. City is currently facilitating the development of a Heritage Wayfinding Manual that will be incorporated into the Strategic Planning process.

3. **Building the Community:** There is opportunity to develop a community center, build affordable housing, and expand upon the network of art and cultural venues. A specific goal includes putting this district on the national map for historic and cultural significance, but also for its ongoing art, music, and cultural production.
4. **Share the Stories:** There is an opportunity to record the history of this district through a documentary or even through new technology, mixed reality (XR). An XR experience could potentially share stories through a QR code tour, and offer an opportunity for the youth and College students in the area to gain experience and explore the future of storytelling while also learning about their local history. Such an opportunity would bring economic opportunity back to the District. There is also an opportunity to develop a local history curriculum to share in public schools.

Words of Reflection

The following words were used to describe how attendants felt at the end of the meeting:

- Encouraged
- Hopeful
- Challenged
- Realistically-challenged

3 | Next Steps

The next AACHD Coalition Workshop will be held on December 13th, 2024. The exact time and location are to be determined, but it will most likely be from 10:00am to 12:00pm.

Action Items:

- **Contribute to the [Coalition Partners Contact List](#)** - Your contributions to contacting and identifying partner organizations in this coalition and community engagement building effort are critical to the success of our shared goals. Please complete entries into the form no later than Wednesday, November 27th for initial invites to Workshop #2.

- **Review [Timeline of City Council Actions Impacting the African-American Cultural Heritage District](#)** - Please provide edits, additions
- **Review [African American Cultural Heritage District Story Map](#)** - Provide additional recommended locations/points of interest