

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 Manor Road Merchants Association (MRMA) Activation Award was awarded in August 2016. MRMA engaged multiple partners to develop several creative projects to help establish the Manor Road district as a community destination and to help support and grow member businesses, increase the customer bases, and increased foot traffic and revenue.

The District partnered with local artists to transform ordinary utility boxes managed by Austin Energy and the Austin Transportation Department into stunning works of art. These installations provided the district an opportunity to spruce up district intersections with designs that would attract visitors and be pleasing to the eye for any passerby.

To enhance the districts brand awareness, the district developed the Manor Monday program which kicked off in August 2017. The kick off included partnerships with **Austin Moonwalks** to bring a **dunk tank** to member-business Sno Co's property, **Yellow Bike Project** was leveraged as a partner/vendor to offer free bike repair outside Haymaker, which was reported to be one of the most popular programs. The VORTEX leveraged their partnership with **Sky Candy** to bring an aerialist show to the outdoor area at a discounted rate (subsidized by grant funds). The show drew the largest crowd of any programming for the evening, an estimated



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65 people. **Nido Hammocks**, a local company that builds hammock structures out of repurposed metal oil piping, erected two of their structures at member businesses - ingredients and Butterfly Bar. Several other businesses engaged visitors with activities ranging from dance lessons to historic walking tours.

Overall, the programs and outcomes strongly supported the Association's mission in a number of ways. Increasing the visibility of the Members and Associate Members in and around the Service Area. Perhaps the most evident impact of this event was the overall exposure granted to our membership with radio ads, social media exposure and the attraction of new customers to businesses during the launch of Manor Monday.

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



Metrics
Number of District Businesses Engaged - 20
Number of Partners - 10+
Number of Creative Artists Engaged - 100+
Media/News Hits - 2



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District Strategy Alignment:

- **Economic Growth, Strategy 1.1.** Develop a distinctive district brand and identity through social media and collaborative marketing among businesses/entities in the district including a district website.
- **Economic Growth, Strategy 1.5.** Start a Manor Road Passport program that provides discounts to customers who seek services from multiple businesses in the district in order to collectively promote the district. Determine an ongoing funding stream for printing.
- **Economic Growth, Strategy 2.2.** Organize a regular event such as “Manor Mondays” that engages all businesses in an effort to increase sales and patronage to the district.
- **Beautification and Aesthetics, Strategy 1.2.** Install and maintain creative utility box wraps in collaboration with the City of Austin.

Challenges:

- Lack of City developed parameters and processes around project feasibility
- Lack of capacity to continue marketing campaigns
- Inadequate allocation of funding for printed materials

Successes:

- Visibility of project improves District Awareness
- Increased customer activity during district events
- District exposure through radio and social media exposure