

August 20 Board Resolution concerning the “Austin Nightlife: Live and Kicking” initiative.

Submitted by Boardmembers Mark Yznaga, Bruce Willenzik, and Susan Moffat
Presented to the Executive Committee on August 16, 2005
Amended and distributed to the Board on August 18, 2005

Liveable City Board Resolution Supporting the “Austin Nightlife: Live and Kickin” Initiative

Austin residents support a diverse, unique local culture, with a strong economy, clean environment, and safe and healthy community.

In May of 2005, Austin voters supported an ordinance to require that entertainment venues become smoke free as of September 1st. The importance of live music and the entertainment industry to our economy and community identity with the fragile nature of the entertainment business raised concerns over the possible negative impacts due to the new smoking restrictions.

These concerns led to the creation of the “Austin Nightlife: Live and Kickin” initiative which is working to ease the transition to smoke free nightlife by retaining smoking patrons in the new smoke free environment and bringing new patrons to the nightlife establishments. The initiative is building a broad stakeholder alliance to conduct a public communications campaign to support patronage of the entertainment industry.

Additionally, the initiative is working with business owners to familiarize them with more sustainable business practices focusing on increasing profitability and expanding their patron base by offering new activities, foods, and beverages.

The “Austin Nightlife: Live and Kickin” initiative is an opportunity for the Austin community to address a divisive issue along with showing support for an important segment of Austin’s unique culture.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Board of Liveable City hereby:

Endorses the “Austin Nightlife: Alive and Kickin” initiative to keep the Austin entertainment industry strong and diverse as the community transitions to a smoke free environment; and,

The Board of Liveable City requests to be added to the supporter list for the initiative and encourage all Austinites to get out and support Austin entertainment and live music venues across the community.

Backup for the August 20 Board Resolution supporting the “Austin Nightlife: Live and Kickin” initiative.

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Purpose: The purpose of the initiative is to ease the transition to smoke free nightlife and introduce more sustainable businesses practices to Austin’s entertainment industry.

Overview of Proposal:

In May of 2005, Austin voters approved a smoking ban for live music venues, bars, pool halls, and strip clubs. Concern over possible negative impacts from the ban led to the development of the “Austin Nightlife: Live and Kickin” initiative. The initiative is building a broad stakeholder alliance to conduct a public communications campaign beginning in late August to retain smoking patrons in the new smoke free environment and bring new patrons to the nightlife establishments. Additionally, the initiative will work with business owners in the entertainment industry to familiarize them with more sustainable business practices focusing on increasing profitability and expanding their patron base by offering healthier activities, foods, and beverages.

Relationship to Liveable City Mission: The initiative is clearly aligned with Liveable City’s mission of education and advocacy and the interconnection between issues. Areas affected by the initiative include Unique Local Culture, Strong Economy, Arts and Culture, Clean Environment, Safe Community, and Affordable Healthcare. The Liveable City Board does not have an ongoing initiative in this important area. This is an opportunity to address a divisive community issue along with showing support for an important segment of Austin’s unique culture.

Key Participants

Leading the effort are Liveable City staff member Brandi Clark and Jennifer Hamre, a key volunteer for the Austin Moving Forward event. Bios are available for review. Additionally, Board members Bruce Willenzik, Susan Moffat, and Mark Yznaga have assisted in aspects of the initiative.

Arguments For:

The effort to develop a program to ease the transition to a smoke free entertainment industry is highly leveraged with broad support throughout the community. It is a good opportunity to outreach to the Arts and Cultural communities along with local businesses and to gain allies in the health and cultural sectors. Most importantly, the initiative seeks to mitigate a divisive community issue which if not addressed could lead to significant additional problems.

Arguments Against:

At present, there is limited Board member involvement in the effort. The smoke free nightlife issue continues to be controversial and has detractors in the community. While the initiative has raised in-kind contributions, lack of funding and legal status may limit its effectiveness.