

Austin's African American
**Cultural
Heritage
District**
Strategic Plan

AACHD Phase 1
Engagement Events Summary
October - December, 2025



CREATIVE POLICY



Art by Rex Hamilton

AACHD Phase 1 Engagement Events Summary

Phase 1 community engagement for the African American Cultural Heritage District Strategic Plan prioritized listening to Black Austinites—especially legacy residents, displaced community members, business owners, cultural leaders, and youth—to help shape the future of the District.

At nine in-person events, occurring between October and December 2025, AACHD community members shared stories, needs, concerns, priorities, and values to inform a grounded and actionable strategic plan.

Engagement also focused on keeping the broader AACHD community informed about the strategic plan goals, timeline, and ways to get involved.

9
In-person
Events

20+
Interviews

170+
Engagement Event
Participants

"I've seen the community grow in ways and I've also seen the community diminish in certain ways. East Austin is the fabric and the heartbeat, the lifeline of Austin. And when you strip community, you strip lifelines, you strip heritage, you strip the heartbeat and it becomes a place that is unrecognizable."

-AACHD Community Member



Engagement was led in partnership with community members and leaders within the District.



In person events were paired with existing events in the community such as the Phaith House's holiday community gathering.



Engagement activities included boards that community members could use to provide input on the strategic plan or shares stories about the AACHD.



At all events, a postcard and a zine with information about the AACHD Strategic Plan was distributed to community members.

Share Your VISION Engagement Board Results

HOUSING | KEY THEMES

What does a truly affordable and thriving neighborhood look like for you, your family, and the people you care about?

- Lower rents and home prices.
- Clear pathways to homeownership.
- Supportive programs and educational opportunities to help Black residents keep and repair existing homes.
- Family-centered housing options.
- Partnership with Black developers to support housing.

“[Houses] can’t be \$600,000.”

“Support for black people who own homes so that communities can thrive.”

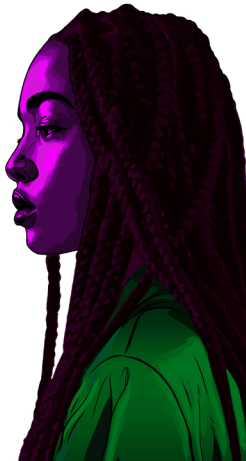
INFRASTRUCTURE | KEY THEMES

Which public spaces in the District—such as parks, roads, crosswalks, and sidewalks—should be improved to feel safer, more welcoming, more accessible, and enhanced to better reflect and celebrate Black identity?

- Safer, more walkable public spaces, especially shaded sidewalks, better crosswalks, and city blocks designed for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Enhancements to all parks with improved recreational programming and amenities that appeal to Black families and includes Black art.
- Well maintained public spaces that reflect and celebrate Black identity through positive monuments, murals, and artwork by Black artists.
- Better public transportation.

“Crosswalks and sidewalks are important for those who don’t have a vehicle.”

“Splash pad with Black art.”



Share Your VISION Engagement Board Results

CULTURE & HISTORY | KEY THEMES

What cultural elements and spaces would you like to see supported, revived or newly introduced in the AACHD—think theaters, art centers, museums, murals, music venues, etc?

- Dedicated Black community spaces, including places that bring Black and Brown communities together.
- Support for a variety of accessible arts, culture, and recreation programming for youth, including dance, music, and clubs.
- Upgraded and financially supported existing cultural facilities like the Carver Museum, the African American Cultural Heritage Facility, HT, the Millennium, and historic churches.
- More opportunities for celebration and year-round entertainment and curated Black events, like live music days and revival of Black traditions.
- Community-serving spaces, like third spaces, a hub for nonprofits, a resource center for district residents, and opportunities for volunteering.



“Austin’s growing so fast, so it’s important to keep preserving the history of East Austin.”

“More curated [events] for like, for us, by us, for us, you know?”

BUSINESS | KEY THEMES

Imagine a vibrant corridor of Black-owned businesses—what does it look, feel, and sound like?

- A centralized website, better advertising, and more media promotion for Black-owned and local businesses.
- Affordable food access, such as supermarkets, natural grocery stores, co-ops, and culturally relevant restaurants, including Black and African cuisines.
- Support for Black-owned and community-serving businesses, especially in mental health, wellness, fitness, childcare, beauty, and everyday services like mechanics and barbershops.
- Affordable and accessible commercial space, with lower commercial property costs and larger spaces that allow businesses to grow.
- Job training and trade school opportunities, especially for youth and people reentering or entering the workforce.
- A resource center to support economic development of the community.

“I would love to see more businesses, partnerships, collaborations, events around wellness in particular, mental wellness, especially when it comes to the black and brown community. I don’t think we have enough of that.”

Share Your STORY Engagement Board Results

KEY THEMES

- **Deep sense of home and belonging:** East Austin is described as more than a place to live—it is family, memories, safety, and identity. Streets, houses, parks, churches, and schools are landmarks because of the people who lived there together.
- **Loss from rising costs and displacement:** Many shared pain and worry about rising expenses forcing families to sell homes or move away, even when those homes have been in families for generations.
- **Strong Black community and culture:** Residents recall a close-knit Black community shaped by church, music, youth programs, local businesses, and shared care across generations.
- **Change without intention:** Growth and improvement are not seen as bad, but people feel change happened without including longtime residents, leading to people being left out and pushed out.
- **Preservation of history and heritage:** There is a strong call to protect not just buildings, but family streets, community spaces, and stories that are often unspoken or erased.
- **Value of community over commercialization:** People fear that too much development and consumerism removes the authenticity of East Austin, replacing relationships with profit.
- **Pride and responsibility:** Despite loss and change, there is pride in East Austin's role in building Austin and a desire for future generations to know their roots and stay connected.

“We had a sense of community, every family on my street knew everyone. My neighbors were Black like me and loved me. Felt very safe.”

“We owned a house in east Austin that we originally bought for \$20,000. Our house had a skyline view of downtown. It was not just a house, it was a landmark for our family. All of my family. We want a neighborhood affordable for everyone.”

“When I was growing up, you didn’t see that, right? You rarely seen, just to be honest, white folks on this side of town, you know, this was the Negro district. 35 is what separated us. So they put us Blacks on this side. Whites was on that side.”

