

Make a Difference Now! Keep Austin Creative & Nourish our Affordable Art Studios



Summary:

Good Dad Studios stands as the preeminent art studio complex in central Texas with an unwavering commitment to offering accessible studio spaces to artists of diverse backgrounds, financial capabilities, and varying experience levels. Currently, our studio building proudly accommodates more than 130 artists in over a hundred individual studios, 10 artist-led small businesses, not for profits, and cooperatives, making us the largest artist studio in Texas. Our studio costs range from \$147 a month all the way up to \$6,000. Our mission is to create a haven for emerging artists as well as established ones, crafting a robust artist support network within our studios.

After having huge success filling our studios, we find ourselves in financial need to keep our doors open. If we can secure funding for Phase II of Good Dad—which includes building industrial art studios, a food truck court and developing a free art school—we can cover our overhead expenses. **Until Phase II is completed, we're operating without enough funds to meet our monthly expenses while maintaining our mission to provide affordable studios. Unless we can fill the current financial gap,**

Good Dad Studios is at risk of becoming a poignant, but brief memory of hope for the Austin artist community.

State of Austin's Art Studio Landscape

Let me introduce myself: my name is David Wright and I create monumental art installed in public spaces. To date, I have designed and built over ten large-scale works permanently residing throughout the country, retrofitted a school bus to be a mobile GED school, and spent over ten years teaching underprivileged youth the beauty and power found in creating art. I love what I do because I believe art has the power to affect the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us.

After creating a successful public art fabrication business in Oakland, I moved to Austin a little over six years ago to be near my son after his mother relocated here. Upon arriving, I moved my art business into Bolm Studio—a thriving and active community of artists that's been around for 25 years—and began subleasing out most of the space to other artists to offset the cost of my own rent.

What I quickly learned was that there's a grave need for affordable art studio space in Austin. As I met these artists and talked to them about their troubles, a pattern began to emerge: habitual rent hikes, artists getting priced out of their neighborhoods, buildings being knocked down, everything *except* artists finding stable communities to create and grow professionally.

Without a nurturing environment, artists in Austin find themselves grappling with the lack of community and rising costs of commercial leases. They either resort to awkward solutions such as renting sheds in friends' backyards or they end up packing their art into whatever free space they have at home. No plant can grow without sunlight, and I believe no artist can thrive within that vacuum.

Here are some facts:

- In 2015, the Austin Creative Alliance surveyed 230 arts organizations in Austin and found that **37.8% of them expected to be displaced within the year.**
- When local studio complex Art Post changed owners, **95% of the artists left due to increased rent.**
- When 727 Airport changed hands, **100% of its artists left due to increased rent.**
- **The list goes on and on...**

Seeing these same outcomes occur throughout the Austin art community reactivated my passion to support social impact projects. With my professional experience in the arts, I believed I could help stabilize Austin's artist studio community and began dreaming of a gigantic art studio complex with affordable, long-term security.

Creating Good Dad Studios

When I first had this idea, I thought it would take maybe 12 years to bring this vision to fruition, but soon I met Calvin Chen. Calvin had a problem he wanted help with: he wanted to build some decent, affordable studio space for artists in his building, but didn't know what artists wanted in their studios. After that initial consultation, that was just to brainstorm ideas, I left hopeful he could do it. About a month later it hit me: Calvin and I's dream was the same. **Together we could create a springboard to achieve the vision of having affordable spaces for artists!** He had the space, and I had the connection to the artists.

Calvin and I agreed that the goal in turning the former insurance building on IH-35 into studio spaces was to simply break even. Profit was unimportant. We had the same values and in July 2023, along with a small support team, we forged ahead and opened the doors to Good Dad Studios.

How It's Going

Since last summer, the scope of this project has expanded exponentially. We went from having 68 individual studios with a handful of larger anchor tenants, to now having more than 100 studios with over 130 artists in residence. I have been blown away by how fast these studio spaces have filled up. More than 400 people have filled out our studio inquiry form, which proves how dire the need for affordable studio space is in Austin.

The artists who've joined our community are so diverse in their styles, media, and stories. Every artist I've talked to at Good Dad is amazed at the energy here. Almost daily I hear stories of the immense impact it has on them to be surrounded by people who understand the creative process and are dedicated to their professional development.

The Cost

I've sacrificed a lot to this project. Now that we have almost 140 tenants, the pressure of ensuring Good Dad's financial viability and longevity has caused me to put my entire life on hold. I've stopped teaching, I rarely make public art, and I've become isolated from my own community due to the compounding stress of it all.

But this community is my current work of art. I still find beauty in that chaotic moment in the beginning of creation when everything is possible, when the laws that govern don't exist. It's awe-inspiring to see the ideas once held only in your mind take shape and hold them in your hands. It's been a struggle, but it's worth it if we can just get Good Dad Studios over this hump to become fully self-sufficient.

What We're Dealing With

In less than a year, we've gone from not existing to being **the largest art studio in the state of Texas!** If we have the chance to complete our Phase II expansion, we will become an even bigger force in the Texas art scene. Here's where you come into the story.

I'm a philanthropist with no money.

I believe in community currency. I individually invest in people, knowing that one day, if I just keep helping others, they will show up for me. However, some of our needs can't be bartered or traded. Currently, Good Dad is operating at tens of thousands over our current ability to pay, simply because we want to keep these rents low and inclusive.

But we need to break even by July!

As of now we've been keeping Good Dad afloat each month through the tax-deductible donations we raised through our initial angel investors and our fiscal sponsor, Collide. That money is running out, which will soon put us in a very tough position. To correct our shortfall, we need to finish our food truck court and industrial studios, but we can't do this without your help.

What if...

What will happen if we don't get the funds we need?

Our master tenants with long term leases would be allowed to stay, but Good Dad could cease to exist. **If that were to happen, our community would dissolve in a matter of months, and Good Dad will be a blip in Austin's history and hopes for a better future.**

It is our mission at Good Dad Studios to become guardians of the creative spirit within Austin, propelling the artist community to new heights. I firmly believe that unless proactive measures are taken to protect these diminishing creative spaces in Austin, the allure of more affordable places may entice talent away from our vibrant city.

What We Are Doing

We're doing everything we can to support our artists as well as benefit the community at large. Our studio provides a myriad of amenities not commonly found in traditional studio models. We have multiple common areas for community engagement, we host monthly mixers and town halls to provoke cross-pollination, and we subsidize artists with worthwhile causes to help get their businesses off the ground.

Here are some of our initiatives:

[FUNDED] Community Event Space/Gallery Available for Tenant Use

Through the help of a generous donor, we're able to provide our artists in residence a 1,500 sq ft gallery space for their exhibitions and events. This will continue to be an accessible, free space for our tenants to host gallery shows, film screenings, panel discussions, fundraising community events, and more!

[FUNDED THROUGH JUNE] Resident Artist Financial Support

We have been able to keep our studio costs low through the generous contributions of our initial donors, which helps us to be more inclusive and diverse. But to take that effort even further, we offer various opportunities for tenants to reduce their monthly studio rent through our work trade program. We also subsidize the studio costs for a handful of our artists and small business owners who provide resources directly benefiting the greater Austin community.

Phase II Artist Studio Expansion

Using shipping containers and other building materials, we will turn part of the parking lot into a special studio area for artists who need better ventilation and who use the louder, messier tools. These purpose-built spaces will cater to artists working with various mediums such as metal, wood, ceramics, and more. We are currently going through the permitting process on this, but still need to raise the funds to bring it to reality.

Community Partner Sponsored Art School

We plan to allocate part of the funds we raise to the development of Austin's first completely free art school that provides our resident artists with an internal art economy. In this outreach program, our artists will help local youth learn the power of bringing their concepts to reality through the creation of art, a self realization that can have a positive effect throughout the course of their life.

Here's how it works: through donations from businesses, philanthropists, and art enthusiasts, we plan to provide stipends to cover the studio costs of many of our resident artist's spaces in exchange for these artists teaching art classes. We'll provide teacher training to those who are new to it, and work with guidance counselors in nearby schools to find underserved and at-risk students who could benefit from viewing the world through an artist's lens. In this symbiotic relationship, we will be creating an organic self-sustaining art community where creativity can flourish and dreams can be made real.

What You Can Do

1. Donate to our GoFundMe today! I promise that every little bit helps and will get us closer to reaching our broader goals with the project. If you donate, we have perks such as:

- T-Shirt designed by one of our artists (\$75+)
- VIP Art Demo Day (\$175+)
- Attend our "Community Partners" Donor Reception (\$250+)

2. Make a tax-deductible donation: Through our fiscal sponsorship from COLLIDE and support from our "Catalyst" level donors, we have already been able to generate most of the funding for our initial buildout costs, provide the Community Event Space, subsidize rental costs, and develop many other amenities for our artists. At this tier of sponsorship, the perks include: exclusive VIP events, naming rights for facets of our facility, and group team building workshops for businesses.

If you are interested in making a tax-deductible donation, please reach out to us directly at this address: **info at good dad studios dot org**, so we can send over the relevant documents for your review.

3. Spread the word: Share our fundraiser on social media and with your networks.

4. Volunteer: Contribute your time and skills to help with the construction, setup, or the implementation of Good Dad's Buildout & Initiatives.

5. Donate building materials or furniture: We can always use extra white paint, usable wood, and tape, but be sure to contact us over email before bringing your supplies in to donate them.

For the community event space, we will be needing the following:

- 50 matching, stacking chairs
- 6 folding tables
- Refrigerator
- PA system
- Projector

Final Word

Your generous contributions will play a pivotal role in making these initiatives a reality and keeping our vision for Good Dad alive and THRIVING. One of the founding principles is to empower Austin's artists through knowledge and experience exchanges within a community of professionals at various stages of their careers.

By supporting our affordable artist spaces, the build out of additional studios in our parking lot, and the 'Good Dad Initiatives' program, you are investing not only in the physical space but also in the cultural enrichment of the Austin creative landscape. Our belief is that through this vessel, we can enable our community to turn their dreams of being an arts professional into reality. We just need the help of our community to keep our mission going during this start-up phase of development.

Let's build a community where the arts are accessible to everyone. Join us in making a lasting impact on the arts & education in Austin's creative community!

Donate today and be a part of Austin's Artistic Renaissance!

Thank you for your Support!

Sincerely,

David Wright

Co-Founder and Artist at Good Dad Studios