




MEMORANDUM

TO: Marc A. Ott, City Manager

FROM: Joya Hayes, Interim Director, Human Resources and Civil Service 

DATE: June 2, 2016

SUBJECT: Response to Resolution No. 20141211-115 (CIUR 1581)

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide City Council with the final recommendations regarding Council Resolution No. 20141211-115, which requested the City Manager to work with local higher education institutions and representative student bodies to develop a student quality of life initiative to analyze relevant data and feedback and return back to Council with recommendations for new or enhanced City programs, policies, or practices that would improve the quality of life of higher education students in Austin, Texas.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in September 2015, the Human Resources Department began holding monthly meetings with representatives from the following universities and colleges; St. Edwards University, Concordia University, Hutson Tillotson University, University of Texas at Austin, and Austin Community College. Subject matter experts from the following City departments: Code Enforcement, Police Department, Fire Department, EMS, Transportation, Sustainability Office, Neighborhood Housing & Community Development attended meetings to provide knowledge in their areas of expertise.

The focus of discussion is on the five areas of interest from the Resolution: Affordability, Sustainability, Transportation, Public Safety, Racial and Ethnic Inclusion. The Student Quality of Life Committee welcomes the opportunity to present the above recommendations during a committee or council meeting.

STUDENT QUALITY OF LIFE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the monthly meetings, which began in September 2015, representative student bodies from the aforementioned higher education institutions collaborated on the following recommendations that remain to be vetted:

1. Continue the Student Quality of Life Committee meetings beginning in August 2016 for the 2016/2017 school year. The committee, at a minimum, would meet quarterly during the school year to address any known concerns.
 - a. Maintaining this committee would allow the students to not only stay informed with City issues, provide support to Council, as well as having their voices heard.

- b. The committee feels strongly that the City of Austin would benefit greatly from continuing meeting because it gives insights on a significant population of Austin that for the most part isn't always heard.
2. Expand its outreach to Austin area college students through NHCD by establishing an internship position that would focus on college student engagement activities. In addition, the position would develop a relationship with universities to provide housing information for qualifying students. The position would also provide more information about services available through the City Public Information Office.
3. Conduct research into the economic impact college students make on the City of Austin in order to better recognize: benefits students bring to the City and identification of needs within the population.
4. Implement an opt-in registry listing housing units that have either met the minimum code requirements or implement a listing of housing units that fail to consistently meet the standard code requirements this would enable students to choose cleaner, healthier and safer housing. These lists would be accessible to the general public, including universities and their students, similar to the sex offender listing currently available by address.
5. Address this public safety concern by considering the implementation of crash rated bollards, such as the pull-up, concrete variety which are cost-efficient as well as effective, in order to safeguard the well-being of the abundance of festival goers in the City of Austin.
6. Support collaboration between the Austin Police Department, Austin-Travis County EMS and the campus police at the public college and universities across Austin. This joint effort will serve to inform students and staff at institutions of higher learning, of the laws and limitations of SBII(84R)/ Campus Carry and the procedures for students and faculty to follow in the event of an active shooter. This may be achieved through assemblies, seminars, training sessions for college faculty and licensed gun owners, and the implementation of specialized programs as the Council deems necessary.
7. Consider recruiting and hiring a team of college students from a wide-range of institutions and of diverse heritages who will work closely with the Austin Police Department, Austin-Travis County EMS, Austin Code Department, Austin Fire Department and other departments and agencies involved with the Transportation Department event coordination. These students will help determine the most effective ways for the divisions to market to young adults regarding public safety including, but not limited to, creating and passing out information during events, the use of mobile phone applications, social media platforms, multilingual public service announcements, and communication with media. In this way, the City of Austin can more effectively communicate vital safety information with the youth demographic whether during highly attended festivals and events or as public safety issues arise.
8. Mandate landlords to make their property's average monthly utility usage and costs available to potential renters. This would encourage landlords to implement conservation-minded practices and helping renters, particularly students and low-income Austinites, make smarter decisions when choosing a place to live.
9. Establish a regular connection, ideally in the form of a meeting, between the Office of Sustainability and Austin's colleges, in order to share information about student-focused resources and news, including grant programs, internships, volunteer opportunities, etc. These meetings should be open to students and each college's Office of Sustainability should make a conscious effort to distribute information shared in these meetings to students from all racial, ethnic and

economic backgrounds in order to make sustainability programs as inclusive as possible on each campus.

10. Fund safety improvements, such as protected bike lanes and cycling safety education, in order to make cycling safer for both students and Austin's general population. We recommend that these improvements be spread equitably and thoughtfully throughout the city in order to encourage Austinites of all races, backgrounds, and income levels to start biking.
11. Increase bus ridership and the effectiveness of public transportation, we recommend that City Council work with Capital Metro to decrease wait times to no more than 15 minutes, as ridership will increase only when wait time decreases.
12. Encourage better relations with employees and students in the Austin entertainment industry by promoting transit routes such as the Night-Owl that operates after normal working hours. As many students work late hours and live in areas outside of the downtown area that don't normally receive the late night public transportation needed, we recommend that Capital Metro extend the service routes to the areas past Highway 290 and east Austin.
13. Implement a method of transportation within the downtown corridor such as the Dillo system. We recommend promoting this mode of transportation, as it would encourage Austin residents and students to ride the bus downtown and increase the convenience of traveling east and west in the downtown corridor as well as decrease the walk time.
14. Further utilize technology such as the Capital Metro application to accommodate for a mobile payment and digital wallet service. As many university students and Austin residents utilize smart phones and do not carry cash with them, Capital Metro should advance the use of mobile payment technology such as the Square technology, which allows residents to pay with credit or debit cards. We also recommend Capital Metro to install credit/debit card readers in all Capital Metro buses, thereby decreasing on-loading time and increasing convenience for those who do not carry cash. As Austin is the number one city for technology in the nation, increasing efforts to utilize technology in all aspects of transit will increase engagement with Austin residents.
15. Create a resolution that will continue the existence of the Student Quality of Life committee in order to monitor the recommendations proposed as well as bring forth future recommendations as deemed necessary.

As Council reviews and considers these recommendations, recognize that some may have significant impact on certain departments and may necessitate additional resources not already allocated in the budget.