

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is experiencing an increase in homelessness and panhandling across the city; and

WHEREAS, the Council and the City Manager have made coordinated efforts to address this emergency situation by increasing spending on social service contracts, providing permanent supportive housing, identifying potential locations for temporary short-term emergency shelters, and an increase in police presence downtown; and

WHEREAS, “Panhandling,” a common practice for individuals experiencing homelessness to obtain money, poses a public safety hazard to all parties involved; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 Annual Report of the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition states that “[p]ersons experiencing homelessness often face . . . employment barriers;” and

WHEREAS, other cities across the U.S. have implemented temporary work programs for individuals experiencing homelessness with great success, allowing individuals to earn money, connect with social services, and experience the “dignity of work”; and

WHEREAS, the City of Albuquerque, New Mexico, for example, has significantly reduced the number of individuals experiencing homelessness, and created the “There’s a Better Way” program in May of 2015. The Albuquerque program deploys staff to frequent panhandling sites, offering panhandler’s a day’s pay in exchange for a day’s work, a sack lunch, and finally, assessing the individuals’ needs and connecting them with services and resources to break the cycle of panhandling and homelessness; and

WHEREAS, according to the City of Albuquerque’s website, “There’s a Better Way” has produced the following results in Albuquerque as of August 2017:

- 3,080 day labor jobs have been given, resulting in cleanup at 564 city blocks with 165,701 pounds of litter and weeds being removed;
- over 13,000 times, people have been connected to services they may not have known about previously, 193 people have been introduced and connected to permanent employment opportunities, 20 are in housing, 189 are engaged with mental health services and substance abuse programs;

- the program has received over 18,322 calls with 96% of those calls looking to be connected to resources; and total donation to date were \$61,971; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to develop the Residents In Search of Empowerment ATX (R.I.S.E. ATX) pilot program that would offer temporary work opportunities with the City of Austin to those experiencing homelessness and/or panhandling. The pilot program should include the following provisions:

- mobile outreach efforts to identify target populations and individuals who are willing and able to participate in the work program;
- identification of services to meet individuals' specific needs, including housing, mental health services, financial counseling, and job training and placement assistance;
- a public messaging campaign to raise awareness of the program, to educate the public that panhandling is not the best way to assist individuals who are experiencing homelessness, and that calls to 311 can refer the program's mobile unit(s) to specific locations in order to offer work to those who may be willing and able.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager should identify services for which workers of all abilities may be reasonably placed or contracted, identify the potential for-profit and non-profit community partners in administering, managing, or implementing various provisions of the program, and identify any barriers to financial solubility of the program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to return to the Council with a memo or presentation regarding possible options for such a pilot program, including the identification of funding up to \$120,000 in the FY 2017-2018 budget, by January 1, 2018.

ADOPTED: _____, 2017

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk