

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, Austin is a leader among U.S. cities in adopting goals related to the environment, sustainability, green energy, and carbon reduction as evidenced by resolutions adopted by multiple City Councils dating as early as the 1980s; and

WHEREAS, more recent efforts include promoting Citywide carbon reduction through strategies such as renewable and electric fleets and a carbon-free energy portfolio, developing and implementing Austin's Community Climate Plan, implementing comprehensive urban forest and green stormwater infrastructure plans, enacting the Austin Water 100-year water management plan (Water Forward) and ratifying the Wildland Urban Interface Code, among other measures; and

WHEREAS, this legislative history demonstrates a commitment to recognizing and actively responding to climate realities as well as a commitment to the health, safety, and prosperity of current and future Austin generations; and

WHEREAS, the focus of many of these laudable efforts pertain to environmental protection and climate mitigation, which are critical to our future in the face of rapid climate impacts, yet there is a great need for broader and more integrated efforts toward climate adaptation and community resilience; and

WHEREAS, climate and community resilience is generally defined as the ability to effectively manage and rebound from acute shocks and long-term stressors related not only to climate change and weather extremes, but to survive, adapt, and grow despite chronic stresses such as racial inequities and social and economic disparities; and

22 **WHEREAS**, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
23 (OECD) defines resilient cities/communities as those that prepare for, absorb, and
24 recover from shocks that are environmental, economic, social, and institutional; those
25 that promote sustainable development, well-being, and inclusive growth; and

26 **WHEREAS**, since 2008 alone, the City has faced a number of abrupt shocks such
27 as the 2008 recession, the 2009-2015 drought, the Bastrop Complex and Steiner Ranch
28 Fires of 2011, three 100-year floods between 2013 and 2015, and the 2018 serial
29 bombings; and

30 **WHEREAS**, the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presents a new, but
31 not unique and certainly not final, opportunity to more fully understand the concept of
32 Austin as a resilient community in the larger context of a global event disrupting almost
33 every aspect of everyday activities and straining a range of services and supplies,
34 including critical food supply systems, on local, state, national, and international levels;
35 and

36 **WHEREAS**, the City of Austin Office of Innovation's research on displacement
37 mitigation showed that households with incomes less than \$75,000 a year for a family of
38 four marked a precipice for risk of displacement and homelessness when facing
39 unexpected shocks at the family and individual level; and

40 **WHEREAS**, although Austin's unemployment rate has hovered at or below three
41 percent in recent years, the U.S. Census' 2018 American Community Survey five-year

estimates showed that there were already 238,974 households with less than \$75,000 in annual income in Austin previous to the advent of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is having enormous and devastating social, economic, and health impacts on Austin residents not only for families with loved ones infected by the virus, but for every part of the community including individuals who have lost jobs as the result of the precautionary measures such as closing “non-essential” businesses to ensure social distancing and the Stay at Home order designed to slow the spread of the virus; and

WHEREAS, these stressors are very keenly felt by front line staff in City and County public health, public safety, emergency management, and administrative functions, and within the community by workers who continue, many with low pay and without health benefits, to provide essential services for the public at medical facilities, grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies, pet food stores, and convenient stores, among others; and

WHEREAS, many local businesses must remain closed, leading to rising unemployment, housing and food insecurity, and loss of social networks and savings for many Austinites, which is heightened by the aftershocks of economic recession and resulting in an ever-widening disparity of impact; and

WHEREAS, in this context, a more resilient Austin requires adapting from the lessons learned amid the current COVID-19 crisis and crafting strategies to achieve community resilience in the face of a myriad of acute disasters including pandemics and

63 catastrophic environmental events, especially in communities experiencing chronic
64 racial inequities and social disparities, including older adults and people with
65 disabilities, which make withstanding acute shocks and stressors more difficult; and

66 **WHEREAS**, Austin needs a comprehensive community resilience plan that
67 builds on the adopted Austin Community Climate Plan, Climate Resilience Action Plan
68 for City Assets and Operations, and the implementation of Resolution 20190509-019, to
69 reflect this more complete goal of becoming a resilient community which can survive,
70 adapt, and thrive in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, systemic inequities, or
71 significant sources of stress; and

72 **WHEREAS**, the Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations
73 recommended developing a framework to connect City services and programs to
74 communities most affected by extreme weather and climate change impacts using
75 engagement with community members to gain an understanding of both historic and
76 current stressors, develop strategies to stabilize neighborhoods and enhance residents'
77 ability to prepare for and thrive after a major event; and

78 **WHEREAS**, the City of Austin has shown itself a leader in Open Government as
79 the sole municipality representing the United States in the international Open
80 Government Partnership; and

81 **WHEREAS**, a comprehensive community resilience plan would help to fortify
82 Austin's open government commitments around accountability, transparency,

inclusivity, and responsiveness, commitments which are vital to response and recovery in the face of our current pandemic and other shocks and stressors; and

WHEREAS, cities within the Global Resilient Cities Network, formerly 100 Resilient Cities, including many peer Texas cities such as El Paso, Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas, have implemented resilience plans that reflect an intentional coordination of key departments, government and social service partners, and the community to create integrated climate, economic, and social resilience plans and identify key resilience indicators; and

WHEREAS, establishing resilience indicators in resilience plans has allowed other cities to use these indicators toward evidence-based policy making tailored to individual city challenges in resource constrained environments; and

WHEREAS, Strategic Direction 2023 (SD23) establishes resiliency as a value across all outcomes by stating that “Being a sustainable and resilient community requires proactive steps to protect Austin’s quality of life now, and for future generations”; and

WHEREAS, SD23 further states that a “sustainable city finds a balance among three goal areas: (1) prosperity and jobs, (2) conservation and the environment, and (3) community health, equity, and cultural vitality”; and

WHEREAS, many peer cities have employed a Chief Resilience Officer, including El Paso, Houston, and Dallas, to coordinate a comprehensive resilience plan, and to achieve an adaptation and integration of strategies across departments; and

03 **WHEREAS**, the Rockefeller Foundation and their Global Resilient Cities
04 Network (formerly 100 Resilient Cities) have voiced an eagerness to work with the City
05 of Austin in providing technical assistance toward a comprehensive community
06 resilience plan, including the potential to assist in developing private and foundation
07 partnerships for funding the plan; and

08 **WHEREAS**, the Rockefeller Foundation and Global Resilient Cities Network
09 have recently announced that ten new cities will be added to the Network in the near
10 future, and Austin is well-poised to earn a position as one of the ten if the City commits
11 to developing a comprehensive resilience strategy and to hiring a Chief Resilience
12 Officer, two key elements for network admission; and

13 **WHEREAS**, there is appetite and desire in our city for more substantive and
14 complete work around equity-driven community resilience as evidenced by the
15 Community Resilience Trust calling for a “community-driven, holistic, strategic and
16 systemic response to this pandemic in the short term, and our resilience as a community
17 in the long term”; and

18 **WHEREAS**, that desire is similarly expressed in the March 4, 2020, resolution
19 unanimously adopted by the Environmental Commission, which calls for “a
20 comprehensive resilience strategy for our City that looks beyond climate shocks and
21 thoughtfully weaves together a plan of action that centers on equity and holistically
22 addresses economic, environmental, and social resilience to both shocks and stressors”

and recommends the funding of a Chief Resilience Officer to lead the effort on a comprehensive community resilience plan and implementation; and

WHEREAS, a Chief Resilience Officer would provide assistance to the City of Austin and its citizens in collaboration with other City departments and offices that support the Government That Works For All outcome in SD23; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

The Council directs the City Manager to take the following steps to coordinate efforts to complete Resilient Austin: A Comprehensive Community Resilience Plan and return to Council with budgetary recommendations no later than June 1, 2020 in preparation for budget briefings to Council:

- Ensure adequate staff support, including exploring the possibility of a Chief Resilience Officer, or at a minimum, appointing an existing executive staff member in an interim capacity, to coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive community resilience plan, building on goals of the adopted Austin Community Climate Plan, Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations, and the implementation of Resolution 20190509-019, and incorporating lessons learned from the current pandemic crisis, to create a new framework for a comprehensive community resilience strategy and action plan that centers on equity and holistically addresses economic, environmental, social and racial disparities for members of our community that also include but are not

44 limited to people with disabilities, and older adults, and works toward community
45 resilience to both acute and chronic shocks and stressors.

- 46 • Ensure that the implementation of a comprehensive community resilience plan
47 identifies direct and indirect resilience indicators and matches them with specific
48 commitments fiscal or otherwise relevant to resilience indicators across City
49 departments.
- 50 • Consider methods to implement crucial aspects of the community resilience plan
51 expeditiously, such as in a pilot program utilizing mini-grants and other tools to
52 engage and assist communities.
- 53 • Organize the comprehensive community resilience plan effort as a collaboration
54 across all necessary City departments, including but not limited to, Equity Office,
55 Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Public Health, Office of Police
56 Oversight, Austin Police, Fire, and EMS Departments, Economic Development,
57 Watershed Protection, Austin Water, Austin Energy, Parks and Recreation, and
58 the Offices of Innovation and Sustainability.
- 59 • Explore coordinating Austin's comprehensive community resilience plan efforts
60 with other entities and jurisdictions in the Austin region, including but not limited
61 to Travis and Williamson Counties and other regional counties, state and federal
62 partners, Austin ISD and surrounding school districts, AFSCME, CAMPO,
63 Capital Metro, Central Health, CAPCOG, educational institutions such as the

University of Texas and Austin Community College, relevant City boards and commissions, particularly the Joint Inclusion Committee and member commissions, and social and environmental non-profit organizations.

- Explore a formal partnership and support opportunities with the Global Resilient Cities Network to assist with completing the comprehensive community resilience plan and funding a Chief Resilience Officer for Austin.
- Rigorously explore partnerships within Austin's business and philanthropic community for assistance in supporting the coordination and implementation of a comprehensive community resilience plan.

ADOPTED: _____, 2020

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk