

RESOLUTION NO. 20200507-022

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, adopting the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan with a primary goal of 50/50 mode share by 2039, direction to staff to develop and include comprehensive urban forest and green stormwater infrastructure regulations in the future Land Development Code, 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

WHEREAS, climate change does not observe jurisdictional lines but causes regional disruptions to the health and safety of all communities; and

WHEREAS, unsustainable regional land development and transportation patterns increase the risk and damage to all communities of extreme weather events caused by climate change; and

WHEREAS, any comprehensive resilience plan should include a framework for regionally sustainable growth; and

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

WHEREAS, this Council has prioritized equity and addressing equity outcomes in their policies including creating an Equity Office and implementing an equity tool to address disparate health outcomes among members of the community; and

WHEREAS, existing disparities and inequities in communities are magnified in any crisis; and

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

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

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

WHEREAS, although Austin's unemployment rate has hovered at or below three 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 catastrophic environmental events, especially in communities experiencing chronic racial inequities and social disparities, including older adults and people with disabilities, which make withstanding acute shocks and stressors more difficult; and

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

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

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

WHEREAS, a comprehensive community resilience plan would help to fortify 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, some of the lessons learned from the 100 Resilient Cities were that addressing resiliency can create a broad range of priorities and understanding the different levels of vulnerabilities that various communities face, any resiliency plan needs to be uniquely tailored for specific communities to be effective; and one of the biggest hurdles has been in the actual implementation of the plans; 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 equity as the first value across all outcomes by stating that “To advance equitable outcomes, the City of Austin is leading with a lens of racial equity and healing”; and

WHEREAS, SD23 further states that “Equity is the condition when every member of the community has a fair opportunity to live a long, healthy and meaningful life; and

WHEREAS, 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

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

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

WHEREAS, for many minority groups, there has long been a desire in our city for more substantive and complete work around equity-driven community resilience as

evidenced by decades of reported investigations but most recently by the Community Resilience Trust calling for a “community-driven, holistic, strategic and systemic response to this pandemic in the short term, and our resilience as a community in the long term”; and

WHEREAS, that desire is similarly expressed in the March 4, 2020, resolution unanimously adopted by the Environmental Commission, which calls for “a comprehensive resilience strategy for our City that looks beyond climate shocks and thoughtfully weaves together a plan of action that centers on equity and holistically 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:

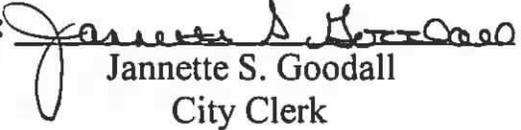
- Ensure adequate staff support, including exploring the possibility of a Chief Resilience Officer, or at a minimum, appointing an existing executive staff member in an interim capacity, to coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive community resilience plan, building on goals of the adopted Austin Community Climate Plan, Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations, Austin Public Health: Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities Report 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 limited to people with disabilities, and older adults, and works toward community resilience to both acute and chronic shocks and stressors.
- Ensure a focused equitable resilience plan by implementing a community outreach process that includes representation from Latino, Asian American, African American, and LGBTQ and all minority communities so that the group can determine the focus of the plan. Organizations should include groups that have focused on equity and represent our diverse community.

- Ensure that the implementation of a comprehensive community resilience plan identifies direct and indirect resilience indicators, including sustainable development outcomes, and matches them with specific commitments fiscal or otherwise relevant to resilience indicators across City departments.
- Consider methods to implement crucial aspects of the community resilience plan expeditiously, such as in a pilot program utilizing mini-grants and other tools to engage and assist communities.
- Organize the comprehensive community resilience plan effort as a collaboration across all necessary City departments, including but not limited to, Equity Office, Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Public Health, Office of Police Oversight, Austin Police, Fire, and EMS Departments, Economic Development, Watershed Protection, Austin Water, Austin Energy, Parks and Recreation, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, Planning and Zoning, Austin Transportation, and the Offices of Innovation and Sustainability.
- Explore coordinating Austin's comprehensive community resilience plan efforts with other entities and jurisdictions in the Austin region, including but not limited to Travis and Williamson Counties and other regional counties, state and federal partners, surrounding school districts, AFSCME, CAMPO, 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: May 7, 2020

ATTEST: 
Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk