



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Deputy City Manager *YPR*

DATE: June 11, 2020

SUBJECT: Update on Resolution No. 20200507-022 Resilient Austin: A Comprehensive Community Resilience Plan

On May 7, 2020, City Council approved [Resolution No. 20200507-022](#) directing the City Manager to complete 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.” Using a definition put forward by the former 100 Resilient Cities Program, we define resilience as:

“the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to adapt, grow and thrive in the face of both shocks—sudden, traumatic events like earthquakes and floods—and more long-term, chronic stresses, like poverty and housing shortages. City resilience is about making a city better, in both good times and bad, for the benefit of all its citizens, particularly the poor and vulnerable.”

Generally, resilience work is grounded in climate and environmental resilience and adaptation efforts. Much work has been done by staff on developing a robust Climate Resilience Action Plan. As we bear witness to the health and economic impacts of the current pandemic as well as the pain and emotional distress manifested across the nation triggered over George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis, and experience compounding grief over our own loss of life and incidents of trauma locally, the need to broaden our traditional definition of “resilience” is clear. Thus, staff has taken on the work around resilience with an appropriate frontloading of racial equity as called for in the Rockefeller Foundation 100 Resilient Cities publication [Racial Equity: Resilient Cities at the Forefront](#), which clearly articulates:

“Cities cannot thrive as diverse community hubs and major economic drivers if municipal governments do not act in making their cities more equitable. By...explicitly factoring the effects of racial inequities into daily decision-making, cities can begin to alleviate the major stressors creating deep vulnerabilities in their communities – ultimately building resilience in a way that benefits all residents.”

Pursuant to the Resolution, staff has embarked on assessing and defining the City's existing efforts to more globally encompass stressors such as racial inequities, economic inequities, lack of social cohesion, civil unrest, housing, and food instability.

To date, staff has taken on a preliminary phase of work, with activities as follows:

- Connected with the Global Resilience Cities Network (GRCN) to identify opportunities from the network such as: direct assistance for funding staff positions, technical capacity assistance for fundraising for staff positions, technical capacity assistance for resilience plan building and implementation, and membership opportunities with the network.
- Completed an initial scan of U.S. cities to understand how other cities have structured their resilience efforts (staffing, offices, etc.), along with how they have shaped mid and long-term funding for resilience efforts.
- Initiated a scan of funding opportunities that could support the creation and/or implementation of Resilient Austin: A Comprehensive Community Resilience Plan, and resident-led entities in Austin that would need funding in order to support the creation of and/or implement a resilience plan. This includes the identification of grant dollars already awarded to the City of Austin that may be eligible to provide support for the creation and/or implementation of a resilience plan.
- Commenced a review of all plans and reports included in the [City's Active Plans Portal](#). This review encompasses the identification of:
 - Existing plans and reports that are relevant to resilience,
 - Trends of coverage and gaps vis a vis facets and issues of resilience specific to Austin,
 - The status of adoption and completion of elements of these plans and reports that are relevant to facets and issues of resilience specific to Austin.

This review will help staff understand the baseline of resilience related work that already exists so that it may be taken into consideration for, refined through, and built on in Resilient Austin in partnership with community and other key partners.

- Initiated the identification of departments and offices with ongoing resilience related efforts within the City of Austin to assess progress and opportunities to leverage on a broader scale and ensure alignment across the enterprise.

A broader internal workgroup is being convened to review initial findings and assist in developing a resilience roadmap that will include report deliverables, identification of resources, and areas of misalignment that require departmental adjustment. Staff will also be working on convening a broader internal and external stakeholder event to further assess work happening already throughout community, as well as gaps or opportunities for additional action. Finally, staff will be working with Finance and the

Human Resources Department to assist in identifying potential resources for the work moving forward and placement within the City's organizational structure. Alba Sereno of the Office of Innovation has been asked to lead this effort as we continue to scope this work so please do not hesitate to contact either of us directly if you have any questions. We will be bringing forward updates to Council periodically with a first report on progress to Council on the preliminary phase of work by end of August 2020.