



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

THRU: Chris Shorter, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer
Zach Baumer, Climate Program Manager

DATE: September 11, 2020

SUBJECT: 2020 Austin Climate Equity Plan Update

Background:

In 2014, Austin City Council adopted the target of net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 via [Resolution 20140410-024](#). City staff then worked with community members to create the first Austin Community Climate Plan, which was adopted by City Council in June of 2015. For the past five years, staff has been working to implement the plan, which is on a five-year revision cycle.

In the summer of 2019, the Office of Sustainability began planning the revision process with the guidance of the Joint Sustainability Committee. Early on, we received clear direction from City Council ([Resolution 20190808-078](#)) and through community input that racial equity needed to be at the center of the revision process. We know that climate change does not affect everyone equally and that low-income communities and communities of color disproportionately bear the brunt of the impacts. The effects of extreme weather, air pollution, water pollution and exploitation of natural resources amplify the inequities and injustices that these communities are experiencing. This is why we cannot solve climate change without addressing equity, and we cannot talk about climate change solutions without talking about racial and environmental justice and centering communities of color in our response.

Plan Content and Structure:

In the fall of 2019, the Office of Sustainability began leading the process of revising the plan with the help of over 120 community members and 24 City staff representing more than 10 departments. Plan participants were organized into five Advisory Groups nested under a Steering Committee. The Advisory Groups developed content for the plan's major topic areas. The topic areas of focus were defined through direction from Council as well as guidance from the Joint Sustainability Committee. They include:

- Sustainable Buildings
- Transportation and Land Use
- Transportation Electrification

- Natural Systems
- Food and Product Consumption

Executive Oversight:

The Climate and Environment Leadership Team, which kicked off in October of 2019, has received regular reports and provided oversight on the development of the plan. This internal cross-departmental team helps to ensure cohesion and coordinated, integrated responses to key issues facing the City. This team includes four Assistant City Managers, 6 Directors, the Austin Energy General Manager, Chief Sustainability Officer, Environmental Officer, Community Tree Preservation Division Manager and Climate Program Manager.

Progress Update:

The plan revision process kicked off in November 2019. At the outset, all participants attended a climate equity workshop, facilitated by Dr. Tane Ward. This workshop was provided to help establish a shared understanding of racial equity and local environmental justice issues. Next, in January and February of 2020, five half-day community workshops were held around each of the plan topic areas, engaging over 250 residents representing all Council districts. Childcare was provided in conjunction with these community workshops.

The plan utilized an equity tool that includes screening questions organized around the themes of:

- Health
- Affordability
- Accessibility
- Just Transition
- Community Capacity
- Cultural Preservation
- Accountability

In addition, the Office of Sustainability recruited 12 community members in order to reach out to groups that have historically been left out of the climate conversation. The Community Climate Ambassador Program engaged people of color and tasked Ambassadors with hosting conversations about climate change issues with their communities and social circles and reporting their findings back to the planning team.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the entire revision process moved online, and we've been working virtually to develop the plan ever since. In total, we estimate that the community has donated over 5,000 hours of their time to this process. The Steering Committee and all five Advisory Groups have continued to meet every other week since November 2019, totaling at least 15 meetings for each of the groups. This summer, we began drafting the new 2020 Austin Climate Equity Plan.

Public Comment Period:

The draft plan was posted for public comment on September 2, 2020. The plan includes 18 new quantitative goals and over 75 new strategies to address the intersection of climate action and racial equity in Austin. The full plan and the plan summary are available at www.speakupaustin.org/community-climate-plan along with a set of survey questions inviting community members to provide their thoughts and feedback on prioritizing steps within the plan.

If you wish to receive a social media kit assisting you with outreach to invite constituents to review and comment on the draft plan, please contact Shannon Stewart in the Office of Sustainability.

Plans for Process Conclusion:

- Over the past few weeks, Office of Sustainability Staff has presented the draft plan to numerous Boards and Commissions. We will continue these presentations to reach a combined total of 22 Boards and Commissions engaged by early October.
- On August 26, 2020, the Joint Sustainability Committee passed a resolution supporting the draft plan.
- The public comment period will end on September 30, 2020. At that time, staff will begin compiling and summarizing feedback to determine any needed adjustments and revisions.
- We plan to have the final Austin Climate Equity Plan available for Council review and potential adoption by October 30, 2020.

Questions: Please contact Chief Sustainability Officer Lucia Athens if you have any questions.

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager