

1 **RESOLUTION NO.**

2 **WHEREAS**, the Austin City Council has identified ending homelessness as
3 its top priority; and

4 **WHEREAS**, the Austin City Council desires to ensure the public health and
5 safety of individuals living in makeshift encampments as well as those around them;
6 and

7 **WHEREAS**, the Austin City Council recognizes that Ordinance No.
8 20191017-029 prohibits specific risky and potentially injurious behaviors in specific
9 areas and does not make it a crime to be a person experiencing homelessness in the
10 City; and

11 **WHEREAS**, City staff recommendations state that encampments are not
12 considered an effective approach to resolving homelessness. See Assistant City
13 Manager’s August 19 memo “Update from the Homeless Strategy Office.” The
14 memo states “...the focus will continue to be on Housing First and the deployment
15 of actions targeted toward rapid re-housing, emergency shelters, low-barrier
16 housing-focused shelter, and permanent supportive housing.”; and

17 **WHEREAS**, effectively allowing encampments to continue as places for
18 people experiencing homelessness to live represents neither a humane alternative
19 nor the best our community can achieve; and

20 **WHEREAS**, housing-focused services and strategies are necessary for
21 individuals to successfully connect to and sustain permanent housing; and

22 **WHEREAS**, the Austin City Council has appropriated over \$68.7 million for
23 fiscal year 2021 to provide housing, social, physical, and behavioral health services
24 for individuals experiencing homelessness, including a broad array of services for

25 those living unsheltered in encampments, such as food, personal and public space
26 hygiene; and

27 **WHEREAS**, the City of Austin has demonstrated that targeted efforts to
28 connect individuals to housing and services are effective when paired with sufficient
29 funding, through previous and ongoing initiatives including Ending Veteran
30 Homelessness, Ending Youth Homelessness, and the Guided Path Initiatives; **NOW,**
31 **THEREFORE,**

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

33 The City Council affirms that the purpose of this resolution is to implement
34 and fund a Housing-Focused Homeless Encampment Assistance Link (“HEAL”)
35 initiative to connect individuals experiencing homelessness to housing-focused
36 services and supports, including social, health, behavioral health, and substance use
37 services as needed. The purpose of the HEAL initiative is to immediately house
38 individuals in safe shelter, create a path to permanent housing, and over time,
39 eliminate the necessity for unsheltered camping in our city.

40 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

41 The City Council directs the City Manager to implement the HEAL initiative
42 through a phased approach, beginning with high-priority Phase I encampments
43 located in different areas of the city that pose risks to public health and safety due to
44 close proximity to vehicular and pedestrian traffic and other hazards (the “Phase I
45 HEAL Priority Locations”). Beginning the HEAL initiative with these Phase I
46 HEAL Priority Locations is intended to provide the Homeless Strategy Officer the
47 opportunity to pilot, assess, and learn from HEAL approaches and methods in four
48 diverse areas and immediately begin to address pressing needs for assistance to
49 protect health and safety.

50 The City Manager shall endeavor to complete the process for Phase I HEAL
51 Priority Locations within six months of the effective date of this resolution.

52 The four Phase I HEAL Priority Locations shall include locations where
53 individuals are camping (1) in South Central Austin, at a major intersection under a
54 state highway overpass, on a traffic island or median that separates traffic flows with
55 a raised curb, adjacent to a pedestrian walkway; (2) in East Austin, on a sidewalk or
56 public easement adjacent to or leading to a public library; (3) along a major arterial
57 through the Central Business District; and (4) in Northwest Austin, at an intersection
58 adjacent to significant vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

59 The City Manager shall work with the Homeless Strategy Officer to develop
60 a timeline and resources needed to implement the HEAL initiative in additional
61 Phase II and III HEAL initiative locations throughout the City. The City Manager
62 shall base Phase II and III locations on learnings from Phase I implementation and
63 on an assessment of the risk to public health and safety for those camping in those
64 locations.

65 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

66 Council directs the City Manager to develop and implement the HEAL
67 initiative through collaboration among the City's Homeless Strategy Office, Austin
68 Public Health, the Housing and Planning Department, ECHO, Integral Care, and the
69 homeless service and provider community (collectively the "Collaboration"). The
70 HEAL initiative should incorporate the best practices utilized by the City and its
71 partners to successfully connect individuals such as veterans and youth to housing
72 and services and the lessons from the Guided Path initiative.

73 The HEAL initiative shall guide the Collaboration's work in providing
74 housing focused services to those living in the priority encampments and shall
75 include, at a minimum, the following processes, at the direction of the City Manager:

- 76 • The City Manager shall designate the Austin Homeless Strategy Officer or
77 her designee to lead the Collaboration and may identify one of the City’s
78 consultants on homelessness to assist the Homeless Strategy Officer in that
79 effort.
- 80 • The Collaboration shall identify and develop low barrier solutions that
81 most immediately provide housing or shelter appropriate to the needs of
82 the individuals living in each priority encampment including, but not
83 limited to, diversion, rapid rehousing support, entry into permanent
84 supportive housing, an opportunity in a housing-focused, non-congregate
85 or congregate shelter, or temporary housing at one of the City’s ProLodge
86 locations for individuals who meet the federal requirements for COVID-
87 19 protective lodging.
- 88 • The Collaboration shall identify existing structures appropriate for use as
89 non-congregate shelter and vacant property on which modular or “tiny
90 home” non-congregate shelter can be quickly constructed with sufficient
91 space to provide housing or shelter for the number of individuals currently
92 staying in the priority encampments.
- 93 • To the extent possible, the Homeless Strategy Officer, in consultation with
94 the Collaboration, shall designate one or more specific housing or shelter
95 locations for each priority encampment and prioritize those shelter
96 locations as housing for individuals staying at the priority encampment.
97 This approach provides opportunities to offer blocks of housing and shelter
98 and to maintain relationships among groups of individuals camping
99 together to better support them as they obtain services necessary to assist
100 them with permanent housing.

- 101 • The City shall enter into partnerships and data-sharing agreements as
102 necessary to facilitate implementation of the HEAL initiative.
- 103 • The Collaboration’s social service and health staff shall immediately begin
104 working with each person living at the priority encampments to complete
105 an assessment and identify the person’s housing/shelter, social service and
106 health needs, and create a by-name list of persons identified for service.
107 The list shall be prioritized for service by encampment location, rather than
108 solely by ranking on the Coordinated Entry assessment.
- 109 • The Collaboration shall assess each priority encampment location, create
110 a workplan and timeline, and connect individuals currently living in the
111 priority encampments to housing-focused shelter and housing as
112 expeditiously as possible.

113 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

114 The City Council directs the City Manager to return to Council for action no
115 later than the City Council meeting on February 18, 2021, with an appropriate
116 ordinance to amend City Code Section 9-4-11 (*Camping and Obstruction in Certain*
117 *Public Areas Prohibited*) to add the Phase I HEAL locations to the areas where
118 camping is prohibited. The ordinance language shall also include a provision for
119 signage indicating the camping prohibition at the locations identified. The effective
120 date shall be upon completion of the HEAL initiative for the specified location.

121 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

122 Council directs the City Manager to return to Council for action no later than
123 the City Council meeting on February 18, 2021, with any ordinances or other
124 documents necessary to enable the City to dedicate at least \$3 million for Phase I of
125 the HEAL initiative to fund solutions for housing and shelter; to fund support
126 services, including the costs for social service and mental health professionals

127 working with individuals living in encampments; and to provide the supportive
128 services necessary to transition to shelter and to permanent housing.

129 In addition to the above identified funding, the Collaboration should identify
130 additional non-City funding streams both public and private.

131 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

132 Council directs the City Manager to work with Council offices, homeless
133 service providers, and the community to identify camping locations to include in
134 Phase II and III. This effort shall include the following:

- 135 • The Public Health Department and other appropriate departments will
136 identify additional camping areas located on medians, traffic islands,
137 pedestrian ways and embankments, including highway underpasses, that
138 present public safety risks and potential public health hazards for people
139 camping there or nearby areas; and will also work with community service
140 providers to determine the more populous of the identified camping
141 locations.
- 142 • The Transportation Department and other appropriate departments will
143 identify additional camping locations along streets, highways and access
144 roads with high vehicular traffic that present public safety risks and public
145 health hazards, including due to risks of the collision of a vehicle with an
146 individual camping there or a pedestrian.

147 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

148 The City Manager shall report to the City Council Health and Human Services
149 Committee and to City Council on a regular basis, and at least monthly, on the status
150 of the HEAL initiative, progress made in connecting individuals to housing, any
151 challenges, and any additional resources needed to expeditiously implement the
152 Initiative, including information about additional camping locations to be prioritized

153 based on factors such as population size, urgent needs of the population, and other
154 issues related to public health and safety.

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157 **ADOPTED:** _____, 2021 **ATTEST:** _____

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Jannette S. Goodall

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City Clerk

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