

RESOLUTION NO.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council directs the City Manager to implement the HEAL initiative through a phased approach, beginning with high-priority Phase I encampments located in different areas of the city that pose risks to public health and safety due to close proximity to vehicular and pedestrian traffic and other hazards (the “Phase I HEAL Priority Locations”). Beginning the HEAL initiative with these Phase I HEAL Priority Locations is intended to provide the Homeless Strategy Officer the opportunity to pilot, assess, and learn from HEAL approaches and methods in four diverse areas and immediately begin to address pressing needs for assistance to 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 The City Council directs the City Manager to develop and implement the
67 HEAL initiative through collaboration among the City's Homeless Strategy Office,
68 Austin Public Health, the Housing and Planning Department, ECHO, Integral Care,
69 and the homeless service and provider community (collectively the
70 "Collaboration"). The HEAL initiative should incorporate the best practices utilized
71 by the City and its partners to successfully connect individuals such as veterans and
72 youth to housing 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.

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council directs the City Manager to return no later than the City Council meeting on February 18, 2021, with strategies and an implementation plan for ceasing camping for the Phase I HEAL Priority Locations upon completion of the HEAL initiative. The City Manager shall post any Council actions necessary to proceed with these strategies, including, as necessary, an ordinance to amend City Code Section 9-4-11 (*Camping and Obstruction in Certain Public Areas Prohibited*) to add the Phase I HEAL Priority Locations to the areas where camping is prohibited with appropriate signage.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council directs the City Manager to return to Council for action no later than the City Council meeting on February 18, 2021, with any ordinances or other documents necessary to enable the City to dedicate at least \$3 million for Phase I of the HEAL initiative to fund solutions for housing and shelter; to fund support

services, including the costs for social service and mental health professionals working with individuals living in encampments; and to provide the supportive services necessary to transition to shelter and to permanent housing.

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

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

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager shall report to the City Council Health and Human Services Committee and to City Council on a regular basis, and at least monthly, on the status of the HEAL initiative, progress made in connecting individuals to housing, any challenges, and any additional resources needed to expeditiously implement the

Initiative, including information about additional camping locations to be prioritized based on factors such as population size, urgent needs of the population, and other issues related to public health and safety.

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

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk