

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the Office of Sustainability has worked with Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Austin Public Health, the Austin Fire Department, the Economic Development Department, and the Equity Office, among others, to build on plans to enhance emergency preparedness and resident safety with a focus on specific threats – flooding, drought, extreme heat, and wildfires – as well as the populations most vulnerable to these specific threats; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 Office of Sustainability report, a “Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations,” provides an assessment of City of Austin owned and operated community-facing facilities, from recreation and activity centers, to libraries and neighborhood centers that could potentially serve as relief and assistance centers during extreme heat, flooding, or wildfire events; and

WHEREAS, according to this report, the Austin Public Library alone operates twenty-three locations across the City of Austin, which include the previous Faulk Central Library, the new Central Library, the Austin History Center, and twenty branch libraries; and

WHEREAS, facility sheltering capabilities were analyzed for each location and resulted in the following information:

• 83 percent (19 facilities) were identified as “suitable” for use as an emergency shelter with emergency communications capabilities, and meeting spaces with room for cots;

• 91 percent (21 facilities) are “suitable” for use as a cooling station;

• 96 percent (22 facilities) are equipped for refrigerated food storage;

• Two facilities keep a generator onsite for backup power in case of an outage;

• Two facilities are LEED-certified to be energy and water efficient; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Sustainability has worked closely with the Dove Springs Community on a resilience effort, Resilient Dove Springs, which could serve as a model for future resilience planning efforts in other communities; and

WHEREAS, in August 2019 City Council adopted a resolution declaring a climate emergency and calling for an immediate emergency mobilization to restore a safe climate; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, Council approved Resolution No. 20190509-019, which directed the City Manager to develop recommendations for creating a comprehensive, community-wide resilience plan, and supporting the general tenants of the Green New Deal; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, Council approved Resolution No. 20200507-022, which directed the City Manager to create “Resilient Austin: A Comprehensive Community Resilience Plan” and develop 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 No. 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, in response to Resolution No. 20200507-022, in September of 2020, staff released a memo which emphasized the City’s critical contributions to resilience planning as the city plays a role as a regional hub in Central Texas; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, the Office of Sustainability released a draft version of the Austin Climate Equity Action Plan (“draft Plan”) which endeavors to mitigate climate change and foster community resilience, particularly in communities of color which bear the brunt of climate hazards due to environmental injustice and institutional underinvestment; and

WHEREAS, according to a report by the Pew Charitable Trust, communities can be more resilient to natural and other disasters when they boost local capacity to recover, rebuild, and ultimately thrive, and cities such as Baltimore and Minneapolis are among the cities now using or exploring what are known as “resilience hubs” both during and between disasters such as hurricanes, pandemics, or floods; and

WHEREAS, resilience hubs are neighborhood centers that are designed to coordinate culturally sensitive, multilingual services to better meet the needs of diverse

groups of community members and to provide a safe place for temporary shelter and relief during days of extreme heat or disaster events such as floods, and during non-emergency times they can provide space and programming for community-building efforts that increase resilience when emergencies occur; and

WHEREAS, resilience hubs can be partnerships between local governments and nongovernmental organizations and are typically housed in trusted, community-managed facilities and are designed to strengthen relationships between governments and the people they serve, shift power to local residents to identify and drive solutions, and, in the long term, address the existing health inequities that disasters highlight and exacerbate; and

WHEREAS, according to Kristin Baja of the Urban Sustainability Director's Network, resilience hubs provide an opportunity to build local community power and leadership, serve as focal points for neighborhood revitalization, and enhance individual capacity while also supporting and strengthening communities; and

WHEREAS, Minneapolis initiated a feasibility study to look at installation of solar panels and battery backup to supply temporary electricity should the local power grid go down during an emergency; and

WHEREAS, public schools seem well-poised to serve as resilience hubs as these spaces typically contain commercial kitchens, showers, laundry, communal and individual bathrooms, large spaces, and private rooms; and

WHEREAS, as local schools attempt to make repairs sustained during the storm and also deploy bond dollars for modernization, it seems pragmatic that the City investigate how City investments could be leveraged in tandem with these actions for the purpose of bolstering energy independence and advancing these spaces' viability as resilience hubs; and

WHEREAS, on March 10, 2021, the Hispanic Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission approved Resolution No. 20210310-5a, which, among other things, supported the idea of activating and funding "community hubs" to serve their communities in cooperation with grassroots organizations working in those neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the fact that hundreds of thousands of homes were without electricity and water for multiple days during the unprecedented winter emergency in Austin that began on February 14th underscores the very critical need for advance planning for community-trusted, safe locations with redundant power and water supplies for individuals to shelter during emergencies; **NOW, THEREFORE**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL:

The City Manager is directed to engage the Office of Sustainability, the Chief Resilience Officer, the Equity Office, Homeland and Security Management, Austin Energy, Austin Water, Watershed Protection, Parks and Recreation and other relevant departments as well as the Austin Independent School District as well as other

independent school districts, and Travis County, to work with communities to conduct a resilience hub assessment to identify potential locations throughout the City to serve as resilience hubs, including schools, recreation centers, libraries, and other trusted, well-known, community-managed facilities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager should explore options for “passive survivability” and ensure these facilities are equipped with redundant power and water through the installation of solar power, battery storage and rainwater or potable water cisterns such that during an emergency these facilities can disconnect from traditional infrastructure and operate independently and reliably, capable of sustaining operations during an extended power outage.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to ensure the functionality of these facilities in meeting existing departmental and community goals, including but not limited to, stormwater management, water conservation, and community solar generation during non-emergency conditions as well as for providing space and programming for community-building efforts that increase resilience and recovery when emergencies occur.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

The City Manager is directed to return to Council no later than June 2021 with a base budget sufficient to fund recommendations and strategies to design and equip hubs for disasters, including the necessary power and water redundancies, and any intergovernmental memoranda necessary to memorialize community partnerships toward the creation of resilience hubs. The City Manager is directed to ensure that each potential resilience hub be located within a 15-minute walkshed of each neighborhood within Austin or within a 15-minute walkshed of an activity center, activity corridor, or the transit priority network.

ADOPTED: _____, 2021

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk