

1 **RESOLUTION NO.**

2 **WHEREAS**, the Office of Sustainability has worked with multiple offices,
3 including Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Austin Public Health,
4 the Austin Fire Department, the Economic Development Department, and the
5 Equity Office to create and enhance plans for emergency preparedness and resident
6 safety with a focus on specific threats – flooding, drought, extreme heat, and
7 wildfires – as well as on the populations most vulnerable to these specific threats;
8 and

9 **WHEREAS**, the 2018 Office of Sustainability report, a “Climate Resilience
10 Action Plan for City Assets and Operations,” assesses City of Austin owned and
11 operated community facilities such as recreation and activity centers, libraries, and
12 neighborhood centers that could potentially serve as relief and assistance centers
13 during extreme heat, flooding, or wildfire events; and

14 **WHEREAS**, Austin Public Libraries alone operates 23 locations across the
15 City of Austin, which include the previous Faulk Central Library, the new Central
16 Library, the Austin History Center, and 20 branch libraries; and

17 **WHEREAS**, City staff analyzed sheltering capabilities for each location and
18 determined the following:

- 19 • 83% (19 facilities) were identified as “suitable” for use as an emergency
20 shelter with emergency communications capabilities, and meeting spaces
21 with room for cots;
- 22 • 91% (21 facilities) are “suitable” for use as a cooling station;
- 23 • 96% (22 facilities) are equipped for refrigerated food storage;

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

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

27 **WHEREAS**, the Office of Sustainability has worked closely with the Dove
28 Springs Community on Resilient Dove Springs, a resilience effort that could serve
29 as a model for future resilience planning efforts in other neighborhoods; and

30 **WHEREAS**, City Council passed a 2019 resolution declaring a climate
31 emergency and calling for an immediate emergency mobilization to restore a safe
32 climate; and

33 **WHEREAS**, Council approved Resolution No. 20190509-019, which
34 directed the City Manager to develop recommendations for creating a
35 comprehensive, community-wide resilience plan, and supporting the general tenets
36 of the Green New Deal; and

37 **WHEREAS**, Council approved Resolution No. 20200507-022, which
38 directed the City Manager to create “Resilient Austin: A Comprehensive
39 Community Resilience Plan” and develop a “comprehensive community resilience
40 plan that builds on the adopted ‘Austin Community Climate Plan,’ ‘Climate
41 Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations,’ and the implementation of
42 Resolution No. 20190509-019, to reflect this more complete goal of becoming a
43 resilient community that can survive, adapt, and thrive in the face of adversity,
44 trauma, tragedy, threats, systemic inequities, or significant sources of stress”; and

45 **WHEREAS**, in response to Resolution No. 20200507-022, staff released a
46 memo in September 2020 emphasizing the City’s critical contributions to
47 resilience planning as the city serves as a regional hub in Central Texas; and

48 **WHEREAS**, in 2020, the Office of Sustainability released a draft version of
49 the Austin Climate Equity Action Plan, which recommends strategies for
50 mitigating climate change and fostering community resilience, particularly in
51 communities of color who bear the brunt of climate hazards due to environmental
52 injustice and institutional underinvestment; and

53 **WHEREAS**, as a 2020 Pew Charitable Trust article points out, communities
54 can be more resilient to natural and other disasters when they boost local capacity
55 to recover, rebuild, and ultimately thrive, and cities such as Baltimore and
56 Minneapolis are among the cities now using or exploring what are known as
57 “resilience hubs” both during and between disasters such as hurricanes, pandemics,
58 or floods; and

59 **WHEREAS**, resilience hubs are neighborhood centers designed to
60 coordinate culturally sensitive, multilingual services to better meet the needs of
61 diverse groups of community members and to provide a safe place for temporary
62 shelter and relief during days of extreme heat or disaster events such as floods; and

63 **WHEREAS**, during non-emergency times, resilience hubs can provide space
64 and programming for community-building efforts that increase resilience when
65 emergencies occur and enable community members to develop familiarity and trust
66 in these shared spaces; and

67 **WHEREAS**, resilience hubs tend to involve partnerships between local
68 governments and nongovernmental organizations and are typically housed in
69 trusted, community-managed facilities; and

70 **WHEREAS**, best practices involve the community in identifying and
71 determining its particular needs and designing the resilience hub to provide the
72 resources and processes to best meet these needs; and

73 **WHEREAS**, resilience hubs are designed to strengthen relationships
74 between governments and the people they serve, to shift to local residents the
75 power to identify and drive solutions, and, in the long term, to address the existing
76 health inequities that disasters highlight and exacerbate; and

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

82 **WHEREAS**, Minneapolis initiated a feasibility study to consider installing
83 solar panels and battery backup to supply temporary electricity should the local
84 power grid go down during an emergency; and

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

88 **WHEREAS**, as local schools make repairs sustained during the storm and
89 also deploy bond dollars for modernization, the City should investigate how its
90 own investments could be leveraged in tandem with school district actions to
91 bolster energy independence and advance the viability of these spaces for use as
92 resilience hubs; and

93 **WHEREAS**, on March 10, 2021, the Hispanic Latino Quality of Life
94 Resource Advisory Commission approved Resolution No. 20210310-5a, which
95 included support for the idea of activating and funding “community hubs” in
96 cooperation with grassroots organizations working in those neighborhoods; and

97 **WHEREAS**, the fact that hundreds of thousands of homes in Austin were
98 without electricity and water for multiple days during the unprecedented winter
99 emergency that began on February 14, 2021, underscores the very critical need for
100 advance planning for community-trusted, safe locations with redundant power and
101 water supplies for individuals to shelter during emergencies; **NOW**,
102 **THEREFORE**,

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

104 The City Manager is directed to engage the Office of Sustainability, the
105 Chief Resilience Officer, the Equity Office, Homeland and Security Management,
106 Austin Energy, Austin Water, Watershed Protection, Parks and Recreation and
107 other relevant departments as well as the Austin Independent School District,
108 other school districts, Travis County, the Pecan Street Project, and the Austin
109 Community College to work with communities to conduct a resilience hub
110 assessment to identify potential locations throughout the City to serve as resilience
111 hubs, including schools, recreation centers, libraries, and other trusted, well-
112 known, community-managed facilities.

113 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

114 The City Manager should explore options for “passive survivability” and
115 ensure these facilities have redundant power and water through the installation of
116 solar power, battery storage, and rainwater or potable water cisterns such that
117 during an emergency these facilities can disconnect from traditional infrastructure
118 and operate independently and reliably and in a manner capable of sustaining
119 operations during an extended power outage.

120 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

121 The City Manager shall ensure that these facilities function in non-
122 emergency conditions in ways that meet existing departmental and community
123 goals with regard to stormwater management, water conservation, community solar
124 generation, and other Council-approved and implemented policy directions.

125 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

126 The City Manager shall ensure that during non-emergency conditions, these
127 facilities can provide space and programming for community-building efforts that
128 increase resilience and recovery when emergencies occur.

129 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**

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

138 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**

139 The City Manager shall return to Council no later than June 2021 with
140 budget recommendations, funding strategies, and a timeline for creating a
141 community-wide resilience hub plan sufficient to serve all Austinites during
142 emergencies. By this same date, the City Manager shall present Council with a
143 plan, budget recommendations, funding strategies, and a timeline for designing and

144 equipping an initial six pilot hubs for disasters, including the necessary power and
145 water redundancies. By the same date, the City Manager shall present to Council
146 any intergovernmental memoranda necessary to memorialize community
147 partnerships necessary to create resilience hubs.

148

149 **ADOPTED:** _____, 2021 **ATTEST:** _____
150 Jannette S. Goodall
151 City Clerk

DRAFT