

RESOLUTION NO.

2 **WHEREAS**, in April of 2018, the Austin City Council endorsed the “Austin
3 Action Plan to End Homelessness” as an evolving blueprint for ending
4 homelessness in our community through focused efforts to fund homelessness
5 prevention, housing solutions, and services for individuals experiencing
6 homelessness; and

7 **WHEREAS**, in June 2019, Council voted to allow camping in public areas
8 when the camping activity does not materially endanger health and safety or
9 impede reasonable use of a public area; and

10 **WHEREAS**, at the same meeting, Council directed the City Manager to
11 propose reasonable time and place limitations on camping, to provide options for at
12 least ten locations (one in each Council district) that would allow for camping and
13 receive wrap-around services, and to suggest options for parking areas across the
14 city where people could sleep in cars; and

15 **WHEREAS**, City staff's August 30, 2019, memorandum in response
16 recommended that Council consider limiting camping for health and safety reasons
17 in areas with high pedestrian and vehicular traffic and in high flood risk areas; and

18 **WHEREAS**, at the time staff recommended against creating authorized
19 encampments, citing a May 2018 U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
20 report, “Caution is Needed When Considering ‘Sanctioned Encampments’ or ‘Safe
21 Zones,’” that urges cities to consider first how sanctioned encampments have
22 functioned elsewhere in terms of costs, maintenance and management challenges,
23 success in reducing homelessness, and obstacles to ensuring such spaces are
24 temporary; and

25 **WHEREAS**, the Homeless Strategy Office opted instead to focus on
26 Housing First efforts, rapid re-housing, emergency shelters, low-barrier housing-
27 focused shelter, permanent supportive housing, and other strategies identified in
28 the “Action Plan to End Homelessness”; and

29 **WHEREAS**, in October of 2019, the Council again modified city ordinance
30 and prohibited camping on city sidewalks, and affirmed its prohibition of camping
31 in parks and greenbelts, in high wildfire risk areas, and in public areas when doing
32 so blocks public or private property or endangers public health or safety; and

33 **WHEREAS**, since December 2019, the City of Austin has held contracts
34 with both Barb Poppe and Associates and with Matthew Doherty to review
35 existing City programs, to analyze City investments, and to review City policies
36 related to homelessness; and

37 **WHEREAS**, the report from Barb Poppe and Associates in part pointed to
38 the need for better public space management and noted some of the costs the City
39 of Austin incurs for expenses related to managing public spaces used by persons
40 who are unsheltered; and

41 **WHEREAS**, in the wake of the pandemic in spring 2020, the City Manager
42 interpreted Center for Disease Control guidance and determined that camping
43 should be allowed throughout the city, including in areas prohibited through
44 Council ordinance; and

45 **WHEREAS**, the City has since relied heavily on the Parks and Recreation
46 Department’s park rangers and our community’s social service providers to visit
47 newly formed encampments and propose changes or modifications to the
48 encampment’s conditions to allow the residents to continue to shelter in these
49 prohibited areas; and

50 **WHEREAS**, in late summer of 2020, recognizing the importance of non-
51 COVID health and safety issues, the Parks and Recreation Department developed a
52 prioritization matrix to assess encampments on parkland that may need to be
53 relocated due to imminent health and safety concerns, though such efforts have
54 been limited due to staffing and resource constraints; and

55 **WHEREAS**, during the pandemic, the City has engaged hotels and motels
56 to provide protective lodging as a public health intervention for individuals
57 experiencing homelessness at highest risk for contracting COVID-19; and

58 **WHEREAS**, the City also continues to make progress on its goal of
59 purchasing hotels or motels to serve as bridge or permanent supportive housing for
60 individuals experiencing homelessness, but the space and services available across
61 the community still remain insufficient to serve the majority of individuals living
62 unsheltered in Austin; and

63 **WHEREAS**, the City of Philadelphia implemented the “Encampment
64 Resolution Pilot,” an interdisciplinary collaboration in which outreach teams
65 connected 126 individuals in identified encampments with low-barrier housing and
66 services; and

67 **WHEREAS**, at its October 17, 2019, meeting, Council considered a
68 resolution mirrored after the Philadelphia encampment response strategy but did
69 not take action; and

70 **WHEREAS**, in February 2021, Council approved Resolution No.
71 20210204-049, which created the Housing-Focused Homeless Encampment
72 Assistance Link (HEAL) initiative to provide resources to individuals experiencing
73 homelessness in certain parts of the city, to relocate those individuals to safer and
74 more dignified spaces, and to connect individuals with housing and services; and

75 **WHEREAS**, the Homeless Strategy Office anticipates Phase I to be fully
76 completed by August 2021; and

77 **WHEREAS**, the recent Homeless Summit convened a group that included
78 the City of Austin and community partners and resulted in setting a goal to house
79 an additional 3,000 individuals within the next three years; and

80 **WHEREAS**, temporary designated campsites could offer health and safety
81 benefits to individuals currently living unsheltered while the City and its partners
82 continue the work of developing additional permanent housing solutions; and

83 **WHEREAS**, Texas's Governor established a designated campsite in
84 November 2019 at a Texas Department of Transportation site on SH 183, and the
85 resident-named "Camp Esperanza" now provides basic resources, including
86 restrooms, showers, and security; and

87 **WHEREAS**, The Other Ones Foundation now manages Camp Esperanza,
88 and community organizations provide other services to residents; and

89 **WHEREAS**, City staff have immersed themselves in national conversations
90 about best practices related to homelessness, including focused sessions on
91 sheltering, outreach, and designated encampments; and

92 **WHEREAS**, engaging more thoroughly with the City's new Homeless
93 Strategy Officer, national experts, and possibly with individuals the City has
94 contracted with previously may yield new insights and strategies for creating
95 humane and safe designated campsite options; and

96 **WHEREAS**, designated camping areas provide the opportunity to create
97 safer and healthier spaces than most of the current encampments and will help the

98 City achieve and maintain a more balanced use of public spaces; **NOW**,

99 **THEREFORE:**

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

101 The City Council remains firmly committed to the goal of working with
102 community partners to end homelessness in Austin by connecting individuals to
103 safe and stable permanent housing.

104 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

105 This Resolution shall not supplant the work of the HEAL initiative to
106 connect individuals in designated encampments with housing and services.

107 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

108 The City Manager shall report back to Council on best practices related to
109 temporary designated encampments on public land and the other issues described
110 in this section no later than May 14, 2021.

111 The City Manager shall empower the Homeless Strategy Officer to consult
112 further as necessary with national experts such as the National Alliance to End
113 Homelessness, Matthew Doherty, Barb Poppe and Associates, or other consultants
114 to gain additional strategies and information related to temporary designated
115 campsites.

116 The City Manager shall present Council with a description of and budget for
117 appropriate infrastructure at designated encampments, such as lighting, water,
118 restrooms, showers, storage, and security. The City Manager shall also provide
119 Council with criteria for identifying possible locations and a suggested process for
120 convening public and Council conversations related to possible designated

121 campsite locations. The City Manager shall name any sites he believes may meet
122 the specified criteria.

123 The City Manager shall post items for Council action as soon as feasible.

124 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

125 No later than June 1, 2021, the City Manager shall present Council with a
126 proposed schedule, estimated total costs, financial resources, and possible
127 community partners who could share expenses and potentially provide services
128 necessary to implement at multiple temporary designated campgrounds around the
129 city.

130 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is also directed to identify publicly-owned land or land within the city limits owned by other intergovernmental entities or willing community partners that could accommodate tiny home structures to serve as temporary housing. The City Manager shall also provide estimated costs for individual units and supportive infrastructure. The City Manager shall provide this information to Council no later than July 1, 2021.

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

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk