One Austin

OUR RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION
Our Case for Resilience

Austin’s vibrant environment, strong sense of community, and thriving cultural identity have come to shape our way of life. In the heart of Texas, Austinites share a creative and friendly spirit that fosters diverse and inclusive communities, with a profound connection to both our natural ecosystems and flourishing arts and culture. Our uniqueness and innovative spirit have led to rapid growth for both our economy and our population.

In this period of growth and change, Austinites face shocks and stresses that—if left unaddressed—pose risks to neighborhoods citywide. Population and economic growth are creating prosperity for some, but not for many longtime residents—driving an affordability crisis. We must meaningfully confront entrenched racial inequities that have resulted in unjust, significant disparities for communities of color. At the same time, we must adapt to the growing threats posed by climate change, as we face more frequent and disruptive extreme weather events in our neighborhoods. In this critical moment, we have the opportunity to cultivate an environment for collaboration and find pathways that address these challenges holistically and increase our resilience—creating a more prosperous, sustainable, and equitable city, while better preparing to withstand future disruptions.

To start this process, we’ve outlined how the City is harnessing our strengths—including our growing economy, abundant ecosystems, and vibrant culture—to address these shocks and stresses. But this is only the first step: join us in our journey as we work to foster a more resilient Austin!
Community members in East Austin tend to face greater social vulnerabilities that make it more difficult to recover from shocks and stresses. Residents in 58 of Austin’s 200 neighborhoods are vulnerable to displacement.

By age 35, people raised in neighborhoods across East Austin earn up to $20,000 less than residents raised in West Austin.

Austin is ranked among the most ecological cities in the United States with nearly 20,000 acres of green space, though not equitably distributed. Although 60% of Austin's overall population holds at least a Bachelor's degree, only 37% and 36% of Black and Hispanic Austinites hold this degree.

In the last 10 years, Austin has had four major floods. This frequency is expected to continue to increase in the near future, as incidents of extreme rainfall are predicted to increase.

By the end of the century, Austin is expected to experience over 60 days of temperatures exceeding 100 degrees annually. Austin is ranked among the most ecological cities in the United States with nearly 20,000 acres of green space, though not equitably distributed. Although 60% of Austin's overall population holds at least a Bachelor's degree, only 37% and 36% of Black and Hispanic Austinites hold this degree.

Since 2008 alone, Austin has faced a number of shocks that have impacted public infrastructure and provision of city services, resulting in: at least 3 boil water notices and 3 citywide, extended power outages.

24.5% of homeowners and nearly 50% of renters in Austin are cost-burdened, paying 30% or more of their income on housing and utilities. 49% of structures in Austin are in the wildland urban interface, and face greater wildfire risk.

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Austin’s History of Resilience: A Snapshot

Over Austin’s history, residents have been dealt numerous shocks — including floods, fires, and a pandemic — and stresses — such as extreme heat and drought, inequality, and a lack of affordability. Despite these challenges, Austin has continued to grow and adapt in ways that have transformed our communities. As these shocks and stresses increase in frequency and Austin continues to grow, we must tackle these pressures to ensure all Austinites can envision a future for themselves and their families. This snapshot depicts some of the major shocks and stresses in Austin, but it doesn’t reflect the deep cascading impacts that these have had over time.

NOTE: We acknowledge that the data presented here is incomplete and does not fully represent the Indigenous Peoples and communities who have lived on this land for centuries.
The City’s Office of Resilience, the Community Advisory Committee, and a collaborative of over 20 City Departments and Offices have translated the key priorities raised through an analysis of existing data and City plans, as well as preliminary consultation with City and community stakeholders, into three cross-cutting priorities and four aspirations.

The cross-cutting priorities articulate goals for the City, given immediate challenges facing Austin, whereas the aspirations provide entry points for further exploration to achieve those priorities. This framework of priorities and aspirations will guide the Office of Resilience’s work forward as we co-develop robust resilience actions and align on initiatives over the next year.
Advance Racial Equity

Disparities in Austin fall along racial lines. Systemic racism over centuries—as manifested in practices such as redlining—has resulted in unequal health, economic, environmental, and social outcomes for people of color in our region when compared to their white neighbors. The compounding effects of inequities also translate into significantly disparate outcomes by neighborhood—with residents in East Austin experiencing increasing socioeconomic vulnerabilities when compared to residents in other neighborhoods. The lack of access to high-quality educational options and advanced degrees in some communities, for example, limits opportunities to secure well-paying jobs in growing sectors. In turn, these persistent inequities in income and wealth present additional barriers to home ownership, reinforcing poverty cycles.

Climate change adds another layer of complexity in how we experience these injustices. Long-established policies and systems have resulted in making Austinites of color more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, more likely to live in neighborhoods with limited access to green space, and more likely to have higher exposure to environmental hazards. With the establishment of the Equity Office in 2015 and like other cities across the country, Austin is experiencing a long-overdue reckoning with racial justice. To build resilience, we must continue to confront these systemic disparities and have honest conversations followed by meaningful actions and investments that support communities of color and create a more equitable and just city for all.

Austin’s Cross-Cutting Priorities

Austin has taken strides to build a more resilient, equitable, sustainable, and innovative city. Our communities, partners, and City staff have led the way to support residents and have strived to meet their diverse needs. In Austin, we are not starting from scratch; rather, we are building our efforts by uplifting the work that has taken place to date and accelerating initiatives that are improving Austinites’ quality of life.

The three cross-cutting priorities link all existing and new efforts across the city and impact how we provide services for the benefit of Austinites. To continue to move forward and drive the transformation into a prepared, responsive, and thriving city for all, we must integrate racial equity, climate change, and affordability.

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Increase Affordability

While the combined impacts of rapid population growth and broader economic trends exacerbated by the pandemic have made Austin increasingly unaffordable for many longtime and native residents, we also face a critical opportunity to harness our recent economic and population growth to create a more affordable city. Persistently rising housing costs are having an impact on homeowners and renters alike, with more and more Austinites considered cost-burdened—spending more than one-third of income on housing and utilities—as the region has become one of the least affordable metro areas in the country. Costly transportation options—especially as Austinites are forced to commute further distances amidst ongoing growth—add an additional affordability burden. Neighborhoods across the city, particularly in the east, continue to change rapidly. As housing prices and property taxes continue to rise, development pressures increase across communities, and incomes remain stagnant for many workers, more and more longtime Austinites are at higher risk of being displaced from their neighborhoods.

Fortunately, we can work with our partners to leverage continued economic growth, support existing efforts, and coalesce around new initiatives to tackle these challenges. We can increase affordability by connecting more residents—including those in legacy sectors and those who lack advanced degrees—to high-quality education and well-paying jobs across the spectrum, increasing access to housing that is affordable, and supporting Austinites who face displacement.

Address Climate Change

Winter Storm Mara and Winter Storm Uri are just some of the recent reminders that climate change will continue disrupting daily life in Austin and threatening our infrastructure and ecosystems. Austin has also been affected by flash flood events, such as the 2013 Halloween Flood, the 2015 Memorial Day and Halloween Floods, and the 2018 Colorado River Flood. The city has also experienced an increase in extreme heat events during summers and ranks among the top five municipalities in the United States at risk from wildfire. We know we can expect more frequent and intense storms like these, as well as more frequent and severe heat waves that will increase the risk to human health and threaten our lifestyle while stressing the systems we rely on, including our power and water.

More residents and properties across Austin will face impacts and damage resulting from wildfire, drought, and extreme precipitation. Austin’s ecology—core to its identity, with vibrant green spaces and dozens of watersheds contributing to health and quality of life for many residents—is also in peril. Reducing future climate change effects, while adapting to these ongoing challenges, will require stronger collaboration and leadership between our communities, businesses, and local government agencies. By preparing all vulnerable communities for extreme climate events, protecting our treasured natural assets, and strengthening our infrastructure—particularly through nature-based approaches—we can take action to be ready in the face of climate change.
### Healthy and Prosperous Austinites

**Equitable access to economic opportunity while breaking the cycle of historic health and wealth disparities.**

**How might we address affordability, ensuring equitable pathways to services and resources?**

- How can we prevent individuals and families currently living in Austin from being displaced from neighborhoods due to rising housing costs?
- How can we improve and integrate services for Austinites, including mental and physical health, prioritizing those who have historically been marginalized?
- How can we ensure access to culturally appropriate and healthy food for all Austinites both everyday and in the context of ongoing climate change and future disruptions?

### Thriving Neighborhoods

**Prepared and cohesive neighborhoods, where community members are connected and have access to needed amenities and services.**

**How might we foster community preparedness while ensuring that our neighborhoods are complete with adaptive built environments and accessible resources?**

- How can we strengthen social cohesion in the face of current and future disruptions?
- How can we increase and preserve access to safe and affordable housing?
- How can we preserve and grow the vibrancy of Austin's historically marginalized communities through arts, culture, open space and small businesses?

### Collaborative Leadership

**A responsive government that partners effectively with community members and across sectors while improving City services.**

**How might we enable collaborative governance structures through new partnership models while enhancing delivery of programs and services?**

- How can Austin institutionalize racial equity and resilience in critical planning, policy, and the implementation of programmatic initiatives?
- How can we elevate leaders that reflect community diversity in key positions throughout the city?
- How can the City adapt governance to strengthen collaboration among the public, private, and non-profit sectors to address the challenges facing our growing city at the intersection of climate change, systemic racism and lack of affordability?

### Vibrant Ecology and Infrastructure

**Natural and built infrastructure that meets the needs of all Austinites while adapting to a changing climate.**

**How might we harness our ecology while ensuring our infrastructure is resilient to 21st century challenges?**

- How can we ensure the City’s natural environment is healthy and adaptable in the face of rapid growth and a changing climate?
- How can we strengthen and improve access to safe and reliable transport and mobility?
- How can we ensure access to culturally appropriate and healthy food for all Austinites both everyday and in the context of ongoing climate change and future disruptions?

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### How might we achieve our aspirations?

The questions below were co-created with City and community stakeholders. Over the coming year, we will be engaging with Austinites across our city to begin answering these questions and co-developing actions that will help us achieve our aspirations.

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HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Establishing a successful resilience agenda for the City of Austin will only be possible if we hear from voices across our city. We will continue to advance key efforts—including Resilience Hubs, City climate adaptation, interdepartmental alignment, and support to emergency operations—all while co-developing our comprehensive resilience plan. In the summer of 2023, we will launch a series of community engagement activities—including a combination of city-held events, existing community events, and focused surveys—to ensure all Austinites are heard. We know the challenges of the 21st century require us, as one city, to prioritize action that advances racial equity, addresses climate change, and increases affordability for all. We cannot do this alone and recognize those that have joined us in our journey thus far. We invite you to be part of the next phase!

THANK YOU

We thank all individuals that have participated in this process, including those not listed.

Go! Austin / ¡Vamos! Austin PODER
Travis County Departments and Offices
U.S. Green Building Council Texas
The Healing Project
Community Advancement Network
Austin Independent School District
Half In Associates
Fruitful Commons
El Buen Samaritano
Resilience Hub Community Task Force
Austin Area Urban League
Community Coalition for Health
American Flood Coalition
Cooperation Engine
Austin Economic Development Corporation
CapMetro
Community Coalition for Health
East Side Guardians
Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO)
Equidad ATX
Housing Authority of the City of Austin
Resilient Cities Catalyst
Travis County
ULI Austin
University of Texas
City of Austin Departments and Offices

Funding for One Austin was made possible by the JPMorgan Chase Foundation

DATA SOURCES

Austin Area Sustainability Indicators Project, University of Texas at Austin, Matthew Pressier and Dr. Patrick Bixler; American Community Survey, 2021 1-Year Estimates; Opportunity Insights, Opportunity Atlas 2020; Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, The American Growth Project, 2022; University of Texas at Austin Center for Sustainable Development; Uprooted, 2018; Austin Office of Sustainability, Climate Projections, 2014; Austin Fire Department; Austin Parks and Recreation Department, 2022 Annual Report; Austin Office of Sustainability, State of the Food System Report, 2022; Episcopal Health Foundation, 2019.