

1 **RESOLUTION NO.**

2 **WHEREAS**, Austin is a leader among U.S. cities in adopting goals
3 related to the environment, sustainability, green energy, and carbon reduction
4 as evidenced by resolutions adopted by multiple City Councils dating as early
5 as the 1980s; and

6 **WHEREAS**, more recent efforts include promoting Citywide carbon
7 reduction through strategies such as renewable and electric fleets and a
8 carbon-free energy portfolio, developing and implementing Austin’s
9 Community Climate Plan, implementing comprehensive urban forest and
10 green stormwater infrastructure plans, enacting the Austin Water 100-year
11 water management plan (Water Forward) and ratifying the Wildland Urban
12 Interface Code, among other measures; and

13 **WHEREAS**, this legislative history demonstrates a commitment to
14 recognizing and actively responding to climate realities as well as a
15 commitment to the health, safety, and prosperity of current and future Austin
16 generations; and

17 **WHEREAS**, the focus of many of these laudable efforts pertain to
18 environmental protection and climate mitigation, which are critical to our

19 future in the face of rapid climate impacts, yet there is a great need for
20 broader and more integrated efforts toward climate adaptation and
21 community resilience; and

22 **WHEREAS**, climate and community resilience is generally defined as
23 the ability to effectively manage and rebound from acute shocks and long-
24 term stressors related not only to climate change and weather extremes, but to
25 survive, adapt, and grow despite chronic stresses such as racial inequities and
26 social and economic disparities; and

27 **WHEREAS**, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and
28 Development (OECD) defines resilient cities/communities as those that
29 prepare for, absorb, and recover from shocks that are environmental,
30 economic, social, and institutional; those that promote sustainable
31 development, well-being, and inclusive growth; and

32 **WHEREAS**, since 2008 alone, the City has faced a number of abrupt
33 shocks such as the 2008 recession, the 2009-2015 drought, the Bastrop
34 Complex and Steiner Ranch Fires of 2011, three 100-year floods between
35 2013 and 2015, and the 2018 serial bombings; and

36 **WHEREAS**, the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presents a
37 new, but not unique and certainly not final, opportunity to more fully
38 understand the concept of Austin as a resilient community in the larger
39 context of a global event disrupting almost every aspect of everyday activities
40 and straining a range of services and supplies on local, state, national, and
41 international levels; and

42 **WHEREAS**, the City of Austin Office of Innovation’s research on
43 displacement mitigation showed that households with incomes less than
44 \$75,000 a year for a family of four marked a precipice for risk of
45 displacement and homelessness when facing unexpected shocks at the family
46 and individual level; and

47 **WHEREAS**, although Austin’s unemployment rate has hovered at or
48 below three percent in recent years, the U.S. Census’ 2018 American
49 Community Survey five-year estimates showed that there were already
50 238,974 households with less than \$75,000 in annual income in Austin
51 previous to the advent of COVID-19; and

52 **WHEREAS**, COVID-19 is having enormous and devastating social,
53 economic, and health impacts on Austin residents not only for families with

54 loved ones infected by the virus, but for every part of the community
55 including individuals who have lost jobs as the result of the precautionary
56 measures such as closing “non-essential” businesses to ensure social
57 distancing and the Stay at Home order designed to slow the spread of the
58 virus; and

59 **WHEREAS**, these stressors are very keenly felt by front line staff in
60 City and County public health, public safety, emergency management, and
61 administrative functions, and within the community by workers who
62 continue, many with low pay and without health benefits, to provide essential
63 services for the public at medical facilities, grocery stores, gas stations,
64 pharmacies, pet food stores, and convenient stores, among others; and

65 **WHEREAS**, many local businesses must remain closed, leading to
66 rising unemployment, housing and food insecurity, and loss of social
67 networks and savings for many Austinites, which is heightened by the
68 aftershocks of economic recession and resulting in an ever-widening disparity
69 of impact; and

70 **WHEREAS**, in this context, a more resilient Austin requires adapting
71 from the lessons learned amid the current COVID-19 crisis and crafting

72 strategies to achieve community resilience in the face of a myriad of acute
73 disasters including pandemics and catastrophic environmental events,
74 especially in communities experiencing chronic racial inequities and social
75 disparities, which make withstanding acute shocks and stressors more
76 difficult; and

77 **WHEREAS**, Austin needs a comprehensive resilience plan that builds
78 on the adopted Austin Community Climate Plan, Climate Resilience Action
79 Plan for City Assets and Operations, and the implementation of Resolution
80 20190509-019, to reflect this more complete goal of becoming a resilient
81 community which can survive, adapt, and thrive in the face of adversity,
82 trauma, tragedy, threats, systemic inequities, or significant sources of stress;
83 and

84 **WHEREAS**, the Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and
85 Operations recommended developing a framework to connect City services
86 and programs to communities most affected by extreme weather and climate
87 change impacts using engagement with community members to gain an
88 understanding of both historic and current stressors, develop strategies to

89 stabilize neighborhoods and enhance residents’ ability to prepare for and
90 thrive after a major event; and

91 **WHEREAS**, the City of Austin has shown itself a leader in Open
92 Government as the sole municipality representing the United States in the
93 international Open Government Partnership; and

94 **WHEREAS**, a comprehensive resilience plan would help to fortify
95 Austin’s open government commitments around accountability, transparency,
96 inclusivity, and responsiveness, commitments which are vital to response and
97 recovery in the face of our current pandemic and other shocks and stressors;
98 and

99 **WHEREAS**, cities within the Global Resilient Cities Network,
00 formerly 100 Resilient Cities, including many peer Texas cities such as El
01 Paso, Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas, have implemented resilience plans
02 that reflect an intentional coordination of key departments, government and
03 social service partners, and the community to create integrated climate,
04 economic, and social resilience plans and identify key resilience indicators;
05 and

06 **WHEREAS**, establishing resilience indicators in resilience plans has
07 allowed other cities to use these indicators toward evidence-based policy
08 making tailored to individual city challenges in resource constrained
09 environments; and

10 **WHEREAS**, Strategic Direction 2023 (SD23) establishes resiliency as
11 a value across all outcomes by stating that “Being a sustainable and resilient
12 community requires proactive steps to protect Austin’s quality of life now,
13 and for future generations”; and

14 **WHEREAS**, SD23 further states that a “sustainable city finds a balance
15 among three goal areas: (1) prosperity and jobs, (2) conservation and the
16 environment, and (3) community health, equity, and cultural vitality”; and

17 **WHEREAS**, many peer cities have employed a Chief Resilience
18 Officer, including El Paso, Houston, and Dallas, to coordinate a
19 comprehensive resilience plan, and to achieve an adaptation and integration
20 of strategies across departments; and

21 **WHEREAS**, the Rockefeller Foundation and their Global Resilient
22 Cities Network (formerly 100 Resilient Cities) have voiced an eagerness to
23 work with the City of Austin in providing technical assistance toward a

24 comprehensive resilience plan, including the potential to assist in developing
25 private and foundation partnerships for funding the plan; and

26 **WHEREAS**, the Rockefeller Foundation and Global Resilient Cities
27 Network have recently announced that ten new cities will be added to the
28 Network in the near future, and Austin is well-poised to earn a position as
29 one of the ten if the City commits to developing a comprehensive resilience
30 strategy and to hiring a Chief Resilience Officer, two key elements for
31 network admission; and

32 **WHEREAS**, there is appetite and desire in our city for more
33 substantive and complete work around equity-driven community resilience as
34 evidenced by the Community Resilience Trust calling for a “community-
35 driven, holistic, strategic and systemic response to this pandemic in the short
36 term, and our resilience as a community in the long term”; and

37 **WHEREAS**, that desire is similarly expressed in the March 4, 2020,
38 resolution unanimously adopted by the Environmental Commission, which
39 calls for “a comprehensive resilience strategy for our City that looks beyond
40 climate shocks and thoughtfully weaves together a plan of action that centers
41 on equity and holistically addresses economic, environmental, and social

42 resilience to both shocks and stressors” and recommends the funding of a
43 Chief Resilience Officer to lead the effort on a comprehensive resilience plan
44 and implementation; and

45 **WHEREAS**, a Chief Resilience Officer would provide assistance to the
46 City of Austin and its citizens in collaboration with other City departments
47 and offices that support the Government That Works For All outcome in
48 SD23; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

49 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF**
50 **AUSTIN:**

51
52 The Council directs the City Manager to take the following steps to
53 coordinate efforts to complete Resilient Austin: A Comprehensive Resilience
54 Plan and return to Council with budgetary recommendations no later than
55 June 1, 2020 in preparation for budget briefings to Council:

- 56 • Ensure adequate staff support, including exploring the possibility of a
57 Chief Resilience Officer, or at a minimum, appointing an existing
58 executive staff member in an interim capacity, to coordinate the
59 implementation of a comprehensive resilience plan, building on goals of
60 the adopted Austin Community Climate Plan, Climate Resilience

61 Action Plan for City Assets and Operations, and the implementation of
62 Resolution 20190509-019 to create a new framework for a
63 comprehensive resilience strategy and action plan that centers on equity
64 and holistically addresses economic, environmental, and social
65 disparities and works toward community resilience to both acute and
66 chronic shocks and stressors.

- 67 • Ensure that the implementation of a comprehensive resilience plan
68 identifies direct and indirect resilience indicators and matches them
69 with specific commitments fiscal or otherwise relevant to resilience
70 indicators across City departments.
- 71 • Organize the comprehensive resilience plan effort as a collaboration
72 across all necessary City departments, including but not limited to,
73 Equity Office, Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Public
74 Health, Office of Police Oversight, Austin Police, Fire, and EMS
75 Departments, Economic Development, Watershed Protection, Austin
76 Water, Austin Energy, Parks and Recreation, and the Offices of
77 Innovation and Sustainability.

- 78 • Explore coordinating Austin’s comprehensive resilience plan efforts
79 with other entities and jurisdictions in the Austin region, including but
80 not limited to Travis and Williamson Counties and other regional
81 counties, state and federal partners, Austin ISD and surrounding school
82 districts, CAMPO, Capital Metro, Central Health, educational
83 institutions such as the University of Texas and Austin Community
84 College, and social and environmental non-profit organizations.
- 85 • Explore a formal partnership and support opportunities with the Global
86 Resilient Cities Network to assist with completing the comprehensive
87 resilience plan and funding a Chief Resilience Officer for Austin.
- 88 • Rigorously explore partnerships within Austin’s business and
89 philanthropic community for assistance in supporting the coordination
90 and implementation of a comprehensive resilience plan.

91
92
93 **ADOPTED:** _____, 2020

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk