

**Economic Prosperity Commission**  
**Recommendation Number: 202004292A**  
**Recommendation regarding item 2a) Action and Discussion on COVID-19 City of Austin Relief Programs from Council Agenda Items**

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 crisis is impacting every individual, family, business, and especially those who were already hurting the most socioeconomically;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has enacted crucial public health guidelines to slow the spread and flatten the curve of COVID-19, including social distancing, shutting down public gatherings, and nonessential businesses;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has estimated that 1 in 5 Austinites will lose their job as a result of these changes;

WHEREAS, minority-owned informal or small businesses are being left out from federal recovery assistance as better resourced businesses apply for funds;

WHEREAS, predatory lenders and financial programs are potential actors in the most vulnerable individuals and businesses seeking COVID-19 relief;

WHEREAS, "reopening" the economy may still not allow businesses to reach their required revenue targets to stay in operation, therefore continuing to risk job losses and the closure of local businesses;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has already taken dynamic, creative, multivarious steps when it comes to economic justice, including enacting the RISE Act and the Economic Injury Bridge Loan Programs, and recently received \$150 million in COVID-19 relief;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin in its 2023 Strategic Direction strives to create a complete community where every Austinite has choices at every stage of life that allows them to experience and contribute to the following outcomes: Economic Opportunity and Affordability and a Government That Works for All;

WHEREAS, the State of Texas has the 11th largest economy in the world and the City of Austin has a responsibility as a global leader in crafting 21st century solutions to social problems affecting those most vulnerable.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Economic Prosperity Commission, with suggestions and feedback from the public, recommends that the Austin City Council

1. Adopt the Five Principles of a Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus to guide City recovery efforts and ensure City-funded initiatives address the dual crises of COVID-19 and climate change whenever possible;
2. Monitor and provide oversight of recovery support initiatives and funding to ensure equitable distribution to those most vulnerable;
  - a. Consider building a digital, transparent platform to understand the breakdown between funding received and outcomes for various recovery support programs;
3. Eliminate ordinances or requirements that penalize businesses based on their lack of collateral or credit scores in order to qualify for business loans or grants;

4. Establish an additional \$1 million forgivable loan program that lends money to low income businesses; collateral and credit score not required to receive funding;
5. Establish a City of Austin program (in collaboration with Travis County) that provides a form of UBI/BI scaled for different levels of need and eligibility for existing programs and other factors to help close the income gap among the most vulnerable and left behind members of our community during this crisis (housing, cost-burdened families, single-parent households, the underemployed, etc.);
6. Scale up the Equitable Green Jobs pilot program to provide expanded access to workforce training and job opportunities focused on increasing sustainability and resilience, with a particular focus on low-income communities and communities of color;
7. Establish a grant fund to distribute \$50,000-\$100,000 to small businesses with 50 employees or less; conditional on companies agreeing to update operations and follow APH guidelines;
8. Establish a grant/loan stabilization program for essential nonprofit workers and organizations in the community that offer support for housing, health & human services, workforce & retraining, and family services so that they can keep their doors open and respond to the growing need for these services caused by this crisis;
9. Develop a program that utilizes the city's unemployed restaurant workers to make and distribute meals to underserved communities, frontline workers, and civic institutions;
10. Authorize the Director of the Economic Development Department to reclassify or repurpose unused discretionary funds for the establishment of an Economic Development Innovation Fund housed with the Economic Development Department; Authorize Directors of Departments that administer City programs to partner with the Economic Development Innovation Fund and/or the Office of Innovation to help fund, within existing budgets, innovative solutions to a prioritized list of Austin's strategic priorities (a modification of one of Economic Prosperity Commission's recommendations in August of 2019);
11. Forgive loans from the Family Business Loan Program;
12. Forgive all City of Austin-issued loans that are being used for operating expenses (even if that's not what they were initially approved for); conditional on companies agreeing to update operations and follow APH guidelines;
13. Waive Austin Energy and other City of Austin utility costs as well as explore rent abatement or cancellation options for restaurants, bars, hospitality for a period of time (3-12 months).

Date of Approval: 4/29/2020 Record of the vote: 4/29/2020

Yea (8)

Rachel Green- Mayor's Appointee, Larry Anazia - District 1; Kirsha Haverlah-District 2, Alexis Taylor -District 3,, Preston Tom- District 5, Nathan Ryan- District 8 Amy Noel, Chair – District 7

Nay (0) Abstain (0)

Absent: (3) Michael Ybarra- District 6 Holt Lackey, Vice Chair – District 10. Ivanna Neri- District 4

Attest:

