



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

African American Resource Advisory Commission

Recommendation: Black Quality of Life Declaration - September 2020

WHEREAS, the African American Resource Advisory Commission (the “Commission”) is authorized by Austin City Codes: 2-1-101 to advise the City Council on issues related to the quality of life for the City’s African American community; and

WHEREAS, the Commission is specifically authorized to recommend programs designed to alleviate any inequities that may confront African Americans in social, economic, and vocational pursuits, including (1) health care; (2) housing, including affordable housing, home ownership, and homelessness; (3) entertainment opportunities for professionals and students; (4) employment; (5) cultural venues, including museums, theaters, art galleries, and music venues; and (6) Public Safety; and

WHEREAS, on October 27, 2005 the City Council approved the African American Quality of Life Initiative; and

WHEREAS, under the Arts, Culture, and Entertainment Recommendation from the African American Quality of Life Initiative, a need for an African American Cultural Heritage District was recognized to enhance the quality of life for African Americans; and

WHEREAS, City staff has worked closely with numerous Cultural Arts organizations within the City to determine this area meets the District's criteria; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has detailed Strategic Direction 2023 to “strive to create a complete community where every Austinite has choices at every stage of life that allow us to experience and contribute to all of the following outcomes: Economic Opportunities, Mobility, Safety, Health and Environment, Culture and Life-long learning, and Government that Works for All of Us”; and

WHEREAS, City Council adoption of the 1928 Master Plan required African Americans to relocate to the “Negro District” in order to receive basic City services, this plan strategically and systematically, along with additional ordinances were adopted to ensure full compliance with the segregated 1928 Master Plan, and the lives of African Americans have been severely

impacted socially and economically by years of intentional and systemic racism due to the implementation of the 1928 Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, March 2017, the Mayor’s Task Force issued a report on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities that is inclusive of a list of recommendations aimed at the dismantling of institutional racism and systemic inequities in the City of Austin and the Austin region; and

WHEREAS, In support of Resolution No. 20180215-082 we also ask the City Manager to, among other things, analyze and provide next steps for collaboration and support of an “Austin Cultural Trust” that could create spaces that support artists and arts organizations, preserve historic and iconic cultural buildings and spaces for creative and cultural uses that function in a way that provides cultural assets that exist in all parts of the City; and

WHEREAS, African Americans account for 8% of the population in Travis County, 13% of African Americans live below the poverty line, 34% of the homeless population are African Americans and 25% of those serving sentences in Travis County Jail are African American men and women. In addition, 34% of children in low income homes do not receive any learning support services while African American children make up 90% of children in low income homes and over 95% of brain development occurring in children by the age of 5; and

WHEREAS, peaceful demonstrations in cities and neighborhoods across our nation and the world which have erupted out of frustration, pain, and the inhumanity we have witnessed in the recent deaths of Mike Ramos, Sophia King, Jesse Lee Owens, Jr., Nathaniel Sanders Jr., Kevin Brown, Ahmede Jabbar Bradley, Larry Jackson, Jr., David Joseph, Byron Carter Jr., Aquantis Griffin, Landon Nobles, Morgan Rankin, David Joseph, Jr., Jessie Owens, Lennon Johnson, Devin Contreras, George Floyd, along with Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Elijah McClain and the countless other Black men, women, and children whose lives have been taken; and

WHEREAS, on July 14, 2020, African American leadership throughout the city of Austin issued a letter expressing their grief at the confluence of violence, death, and racism that this moment has revealed, stated a need to intentionally create and nurture a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment for African Americans and other people of color both within our communities and within the City of Austin government. They expressed a commitment to working together and with their colleagues across our government to: (1) ensure executive teams and managers have the necessary tools, resources and are well equipped to support anti-racism training and encourage open dialogue about the impact of structural and systemic racism within our operations, (2) work with City of Austin leadership to analyze the systems and practices that have created disparate treatment and outcomes for African Americans within our workforce, and (3) ensure we are growing and nurturing a cadre of future African American leaders within our government and individual departments to continue the long march toward the City’s vision of becoming a beacon of social and racial equity; and

WHEREAS, on August 5, 2020 Mayor Steve Adler highlighted the institutional racism and systemic inequities that exist in our community and across the country, referenced actions taken by other southern cities, such as Asheville, North Carolina who recognize the significance of reinvesting into Black communities to aid in rectifying years of systemic racism via the City Council, approved “RESOLUTION SUPPORTING COMMUNITY REPARATIONS FOR BLACK ASHEVILLE”; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Adler requested and stated “the City Council members to begin planning a path toward restitution and city leaders should support those trying to push the initiative forward. It will require us to be intentional about addressing our history and righting the wrongs. It is the work of saying Black Lives Matter.”; and,

WHEREAS, Racism has a detrimental effect on the health and lives of people of color and is a public health crisis affecting our entire city;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION SUPPORTS ALL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND ALL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH DISPARITIES DUE TO RACIAL INEQUITIES; AND,

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION WILL PARTNER MORE FREQUENTLY WITH THE AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CITY TO ACHIEVE SAFE AND EQUITABLE OUTCOMES FOR THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY; AND

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT THE AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL, MAYOR, CITY MANAGER, AND EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP MUST EMBED RACIAL EQUITY IN ALL SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS, BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER, VOICE AND CAPACITY TO REDUCE RACISM'S HARMFUL EFFECTS; THEREFORE, REMAINING COMMITTED TO THE PROMISES MADE TO ALL CONSTITUENTS IN PROVIDING A CITY THAT WORKS FOR ALL.

I affirm this recommendation was approved by the African American Resource Advisory Commission.

Daryl Horton
AARAC Commission Chair

Date