

1 **RESOLUTION NO.**

2
3 **Current Conditions**

4 **WHEREAS**, agriculture is extremely susceptible to the impacts of climate
5 change, and climate models show that global crop production will decline every
6 decade for the rest of this century due to drought, heat, and flooding; and

7 **WHEREAS**, water supplies in Central Texas are vulnerable to climate-
8 related threats including drought, floods, and invasive species, and the region’s
9 population is expected to double by 2040 – placing even greater stress on our water
10 resources; and

11 **WHEREAS**, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special
12 Report, “Climate Change and Land,” notes that formulating effective adaptation
13 strategies could reduce or even avoid some of the negative impacts of climate
14 change on food security; and

15 **WHEREAS**, the weather emergency that occurred on February 15, 2021,
16 and lasted the greater part of a week underscored the fragility of our local and
17 regional food systems; and

18 **City of Austin Food Access Initiatives**

19 **WHEREAS**, in 2013, City Council adopted the Urban Farms Ordinance and
20 cited the ways that farms and community gardens support the City’s Climate
21 Protection and Zero Waste initiatives by:

- 22 • providing access to nutritious foods produced with fewer carbon
23 resources than those shipped to the community from other regions;

- increasing plants in the environment and thus reducing the need for energy required for cooling;
- increasing stormwater collection;
- contributing to food security for the City; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20160303-020 directed the City Manager to develop recommendations related to food access and to prioritize it as a focus area for the City of Austin Equity Office; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20170302-034 directed the City Manager to develop recommendations for reforming the City’s economic development incentives policies to, among other things, increase access to healthy food options in the Eastern Crescent; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, Council adopted Austin Strategic Direction 2023, which prioritizes community-informed initiatives to make healthy and affordable foods easily accessible to all, especially for Austin’s vulnerable populations and historically marginalized communities; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20181018-039 directed the City Manager to develop an incentives program for grocery stores and other investments in Austin’s food system; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20190808-078’s declaration of a climate emergency also called for immediate and coordinated mobilization by the City to address the causes and consequences of climate change, including the considering of a range of innovative strategies such as community agriculture and local food access; and

47 **WHEREAS**, Council Resolution No. 20200611-050 set a goal of zero racial
48 disparities under the safety strategic outcome in Strategic Direction 2023 and
49 directed the City Manager to craft recommendations to mitigate racial disparities in
50 particular areas of concern, including food access; and

51 **City of Austin Food System Resilience Efforts**

52 **WHEREAS**, Council Resolution No. 20190509-019 directed the City
53 Manager to develop recommendations for creating a comprehensive, community-
54 wide resilience plan, and supporting the general tenets of the Green New Deal,
55 which include securing community resiliency and access to healthy food; and

56 **WHEREAS**, Council Resolution No. 20200507-022 directed the City
57 Manager to build on various other plans related to climate resilience and to create
58 “Resilient Austin: A Comprehensive Community Resilience Plan” to “reflect this
59 more complete goal of becoming a resilient community which can survive, adapt,
60 and thrive in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, systemic inequities, or
61 significant sources of stress”; and

62 **WHEREAS**, the September 2020 staff memo issued in response to
63 Resolution No. 20200507-022 emphasizes Austin’s critical role as a regional hub
64 for resilience planning in Central Texas and cites the challenge of accessing
65 healthy food as one of our community primary stressors; and

66 **WHEREAS**, in 2020, the Office of Sustainability released a draft version of
67 the Austin Climate Equity Action Plan (“draft Plan”) which endeavors to mitigate
68 climate change and foster community resilience, particularly in communities of
69 color which bear the brunt of climate hazards due to environmental injustice and
70 institutional underinvestment; and

71 **WHEREAS**, the draft Plan contains strategies and recommendations
72 relating to food and product consumption with the overall goal of ensuring that by
73 2030, “100% of Austinites, with a focus on the food insecure, can access a pro-
74 climate, pro-health food system that is community-driven, prioritizes regenerative
75 agriculture, supports dietary and health agency, prefers plant-based over animal-
76 based foods and minimizes food waste”; and

77 **WHEREAS**, the draft Plan includes strategies for meeting this goal,
78 including building a regional food system network to facilitate and coordinate
79 large-scale, pro-health, pro-climate food purchasing and distribution from
80 regenerative agricultural producers; and

81 **WHEREAS**, in addition, the draft Plan calls for the expansion of the City’s
82 circular economy program and the use of available City-owned space and/or the
83 leveraging of partnerships for rent-subsidized incubation spaces, grants, loans and
84 technical assistance for qualifying circular organizations; and

85 **WHEREAS**, in January of 2021, the Joint Sustainability Committee
86 recommended that the City of Austin support the Glasgow Food and Climate
87 declaration, which endeavors to bring together municipalities all over the world to
88 commit to developing sustainable food policies and to centering food and farming
89 within our global response to our climate emergency; and

90 **Food System Planning**

91 **WHEREAS**, in 2014, Hawaii initiated the Aloha+Challenge to address six
92 metrics from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030
93 including “clean energy transformation, local food production, management of
94 natural resources, solid waste reduction, creating smart and sustainable
95 communities, and building and educating a green workforce,” and

96 **WHEREAS**, the plan includes an online dashboard so the public can track
97 the progress toward these goals; and

98 **WHEREAS**, New York City’s “Food Forward NYC,” provides a 10-year
99 plan to achieve a more equitable, sustainable, and healthy food system by 2031 and
100 is premised on five overarching goals:

- 101 • All New Yorkers have multiple ways to access healthy, affordable,
102 and culturally appropriate food.
- 103 • New York City’s food economy drives economic opportunity and
104 provides good jobs.
- 105 • The supply chains that feed New York City are modern, efficient, and
106 resilient.
- 107 • New York City’s food is produced, distributed, and disposed of
108 sustainably.
- 109 • New York City will support the systems and knowledge to implement
110 the 10-year food policy plan.

111 **WHEREAS**, on April 4, 2021, the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board
112 recommended that the City of Austin and Travis County support and fund an
113 Austin/Travis County Food System Plan and that such a plan be developed through
114 an equitable, inclusive process led by a Community Advisory Board comprised of
115 community and business members impacted by food system inequities; and

116 **Public Land for Community Benefits**

117 **WHEREAS**, the Austin City Council has long advocated for the
118 redevelopment of City-owned land for the furtherance of community priorities and

119 public benefits, such as affordable housing, emergency shelters for individuals
120 experiencing homelessness, permanent supportive housing, creative spaces,
121 affordable lease spaces for nonprofits, workforce development, childcare, open
122 space and recreation, environmental protection, and the advancement of
123 transportation goals; and

124 **WHEREAS**, in August of 2015, the Office of Real Estate Services, in
125 conjunction with other City Departments, issued a memo detailing surplus tracts of
126 land that could be dispossessed and sold; and

127 **WHEREAS**, thus far, those sales have not occurred and three of the
128 identified tracts have been transferred to other Departments for reuse; and

129 **WHEREAS**, Council Resolution No. 20161103-045 directed the City's
130 Strategic Facilities Governance Team to collaborate with AISD, Travis County,
131 Capital Metro, ACC, and other public entities on identifying opportunities within
132 each entity's real estate portfolio for redevelopment of public land, joint-use
133 agreements, and other arrangements that might help achieve shared priority policy
134 goals; and

135 **City-Owned Land for Food Access**

136 **WHEREAS**, in 2014, Council approved Resolution No. 20140807-106,
137 which directed the City Manager to work with community members to develop
138 goals and a vision for use of the City-owned property located on the northeast
139 corner of South Pleasant Valley Road and East William Cannon Drive; and

140 **WHEREAS**, staff's report in response stated that the developable land
141 appeared to have four potential reuse scenarios that could meet the expressed

142 community goals, with the first reuse scenario being development of the land as a
143 community-centered project related to food access and food security; and

144 **WHEREAS**, Council then approved Resolution No. 20141211-129, which
145 directed the City Manager to continue efforts and outreach on the potential
146 development of portions of the former Williamson Creek Wastewater Treatment
147 Plant site to enhance the Dove Springs community and to report to Council,
148 relevant boards, and commissions on a semi-annual basis for input as the
149 development plan is refined; and

150 **WHEREAS**, the City has not yet initiated a development plan for the
151 approximately seven developable acres; and

152 **WHEREAS**, in 2018, City staff proposed selling 4711 Winnebago to a
153 private developer, but the Council passed Resolution No. 20180614-069 to retain
154 the tract for community benefit, and the site was later leased at a low cost to the
155 nonprofit Urban Roots for the purposes of advancing urban agriculture, addressing
156 food insecurity, and providing learning and employment opportunities for local
157 youth; and

158 **WHEREAS**, the City has begun to use the Onion Creek flood buyout areas
159 to establish sustainable farming practices to address long-standing food access
160 issues in the area; and

161 **WHEREAS**, the City of Austin entered into an interlocal agreement with
162 Travis County to commission a study addressing food accessibility and assessing
163 10 city-owned parcels for their potential as food retail outlets; and

164 **WHEREAS**, in May of 2019, the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board
165 recommended that agricultural production be considered as a best use of publicly
166 acquired land on property with a USDA prime farmland designation; and

167 **COVID-19’s Impact on Food Insecurity**

168 **WHEREAS**, as the pandemic strains our community’s economy and
169 highlights preexisting fractures in our existing social support systems, food access
170 disparities have grown dangerously more heightened and pronounced; and

171 **WHEREAS**, in June of 2020, the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board
172 recommended that the City and Travis County do the following:

- 173 • review staffing and resources invested in the local food system to
174 ensure sufficient capacity and authority both to respond to the food
175 crisis created by the pandemic as well as to create a resilient,
176 sustainable regional food system;
- 177 • ensure that major planning and resource-allocation decisions are
178 driven by those most negatively and inequitably impacted by the
179 current food system;
- 180 • identify gaps in current data, disaggregate data by race, and partner
181 with existing community efforts to collect qualitative and quantitative
182 information to inform regional needs;
- 183 • commit additional resources; and

184 **WHEREAS**, during the pandemic, the City of Austin and community
185 partners developed the Eating Apart Together (EAT) initiative, a meal and water
186 delivery program developed in response to COVID-19, and as of October 2020, the

187 EAT initiative has served more than 500,000 meals to people experiencing
188 homelessness; and

189 **WHEREAS**, prior to COVID-19, there were gaps in food availability for
190 individuals experiencing homelessness, with areas such as Downtown having
191 multiple sources throughout the week and more limited options on weekends, and
192 some areas of the City with few options at all; and

193 **WHEREAS**, a needs assessment and plan will help address food insecurity
194 and access among our unsheltered community, not just as the challenges of
195 COVID-19 continue to evolve, but also in post-pandemic Austin; and

196 **WHEREAS**, Council approved Resolution No. 20200507-058, directing the
197 City Manager to allocate funding for caregiver meals to be prepared by local
198 restaurants impacted by COVID-19 and delivered through Austin-area school
199 district school meal distribution sites; and

200 **WHEREAS**, according to a January 2021 memo, UT Dell Medical School
201 analyzed 2-1-1 calls related to food need and information about resource
202 availability and identified areas including 78754 (Dessau Road/East Walnut
203 Creek), 78747 (Creedmoor), and 78741 (East Riverside/Montopolis) as having
204 high volumes of food need calls to 2-1-1 but comparatively few food resources
205 such as food pantries or distributions in their areas, and areas such as 78728 (Wells
206 Branch) as having many households and individuals receiving distributions, but no
207 food pantries where community members can receive food regularly; and

208 **Current Food System Needs**

209 **WHEREAS**, experts have begun encouraging the practice of regenerative
210 farming, a technique of farming which attempts to mitigate and combat climate

211 change by restoring soil biodiversity, reducing carbon emissions, and improving
212 water supply; and

213 **WHEREAS**, regenerative farming aligns with and supports the City of
214 Austin’s environmental goals and resource planning; and

215 **WHEREAS**, Austin has no public cold storage facilities, which would allow
216 our community to store local food, better prepare for times of food shortages, and
217 provide residents with more access to whole foods, fresh vegetables, fruits, and
218 perishable produce; and

219 **WHEREAS**, during the 2013-2014 community discussion about urban
220 farming, the Economic Development Department committed to researching
221 potential locations for a slaughterhouse and food processing facilities, but these
222 needs remain unaddressed; and

223 **WHEREAS**, using city-owned land to meet identified gaps in our food
224 system will help Austin expand its role in our regional food system and enhance
225 community resilience; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

227 The City of Austin is committed to rectifying the racial disparities that
228 plague our community’s food system and strengthening our community food
229 system infrastructure so we can endure future disasters and protect the health of
230 every household in our community.

231 The City Manager shall lead the planning and implementation of a just and
232 resilient regional food system. This scope of work should include appropriately
233 resourcing strategic planning for ending food insecurity, emergency planning and

234 coordination for inevitable disruptions to supply, and values-based procurement for
235 equitable economic and health outcomes and environmental regeneration.

236 The City Manager is directed to initiate a planning process and multi-lingual
237 engagement strategy for the creation of the Austin Travis County Food System
238 Plan (“the Plan”), which shall convene experts and stakeholders to craft a 5-year
239 plan that will address, at a minimum, sustainable operational structures, food
240 access initiatives, food worker programs, and financing solutions to strengthen and
241 address historical disparities in our community and enhance our community’s food
242 system resilience. The planning documents should include planning efforts around
243 food production, processing, distribution, food security and access, sustainability,
244 and waste.

245 The City Manager is directed to engage Travis County with the prospect of
246 jointly collaborating on this initiative.

247 The City Manager is directed to return to Council with an engagement
248 strategy, identified stakeholders, and timeline for finalization no later than August
249 2021. Should additional resources be required, the City Manager shall return to
250 Council with a budget item for consideration prior to the FY 21-22 budget process.
251 Once the Plan has been finalized, the City Manager shall create an online
252 dashboard to monitor the progress made on the goals, recommendations, and action
253 items within the Plan.

254 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

255 Apart and separate from the Austin Travis County Food System Plan, the
256 City Manager shall conduct an immediate needs assessment and create a
257 community-wide plan to address food insecurity and access in our unsheltered
258 community during times of both non-crisis and crisis. The City Manager is directed

259 to engage in this planning process social service providers, faith-based groups, the
260 Austin Homelessness Advisory Council and other individuals with lived
261 experience to assess current food access points in our community for individuals
262 who are unsheltered, determine gaps or redundancies in our community around
263 these needs, and return to Council with an actionable and long-term plan for
264 addressing the food needs of our community's unsheltered during times of both
265 crisis and non-crisis. The City Manager is directed to report back with a timeline
266 for the creation of this plan and subsequent updates no later than August 2021.

267 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

268 The City Manager shall review and recommend eligible financial resources
269 to support the growth and stabilization of the local food system, including possible
270 funds from the American Rescue Plan, bonds, and Chapter 380 financial
271 incentives. The City Manager shall also explore what financial vehicles other areas
272 such as New York City and Hawaii have used for such purposes and shall provide
273 Council with a memorandum detailing possible options no later than August 2021.

274 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

275 The City Manager shall estimate costs required to address the needs
276 identified in Community Engagement and Health Equity Division of UT Dell
277 Medical School survey for the Food Access Task Force and the June 2020
278 COVID-19 food system response recommendations from the Austin Travis County
279 Food Policy Board and shall provide these to Council in conjunction with the
280 proposed Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

282 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

283 The City Manager is directed to create a prioritization matrix that can be
284 used to assess city-owned land for the purposes of strengthening our local and
285 regional food system and promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in urban farm
286 opportunities. The City Manager is directed to engage Travis County to assess
287 interest in leveraging its respective real estate portfolio for such an endeavor, as
288 well.

289 Upon completion of this matrix, the City Manager is directed to build on the
290 work of the previous analyses described above and to identify a tract or multiple
291 tracts of City-owned land that can be used for the following purposes:

- 292 • cold storage;
- 293 • regenerative agriculture;
- 294 • slaughterhouse uses;
- 295 • food processing facilities;
- 296 • alternative agricultural production such as vertical agriculture and
297 hydro/aeroponics; and
- 298 • other land-deficient food system needs identified by the City
299 Manager.

300 The City Manager is directed to build upon the City research that has been
301 conducted thus far, such as the analysis of the Williamson Creek Wastewater
302 Treatment Plan and the surplus tracts identified in the 2015 Office of Real Estate
303 Services memo. The City Manager shall also review current and potential future
304 uses for the Hornsby Bend tracts under the stewardship of the Austin Water Utility.

305 The City Manager is further directed to bring the list of all properties
306 identified in preferred ranking for such a purpose(s) to the Public Health
307 Committee and via memorandum no later than August 2021.

308 Upon the release of the memorandum to the full City Council and
309 presentation to the Public Health Committee, the City Manager shall construct an
310 Request For Information or Request For Proposals for the lease of identified tracts
311 as appropriate for the aforementioned uses and shall apprise the Public Health
312 Committee about the scope of the RFI or RFP and solicit feedback. The City
313 Manager shall return to Council to approve the RFP before it is issued. Once the
314 RFP has closed and the City Manager has assessed the offers, the City Manager is
315 directed to present the results of the RFP process during a Council work session.
316 The City Manager shall seek Council approval prior to negotiation of an
317 agreement.

318 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

319 The City Manager is directed to continue managing, funding, and providing
320 the appropriate space for the EAT initiative until appropriate nonprofits or other
321 partners can continue its operations or until certain pre-determined metrics have
322 been met that demonstrate that the needs among the unsheltered for shelf stable or
323 prepared meals during COVID are no longer required.
324

325 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

326 The City Council affirms its endorsement of the Glasgow Food and Climate
327 Declaration and directs the City Manager to pledge the City of Austin’s support in
328 advance of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Climate Change
329 Conference (UNFCCC) in Glasgow in November 2021.

330
331 **ADOPTED:** _____, 2021 **ATTEST:** _____
332 Jannette S. Goodall
333 City Clerk
334
335

DRAFT