



**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
FY22/23 BUDGET RECOMMENDATION 20220412-4d(1)**

Date: April 12, 2022

Subject: Increase Economic (Direct) Assistance for Renters

Authored By: Commissioner Kendra Garrett

Recommendation

The Community Development Commission recommends that the City Manager increase the budgeted amount for economic assistance to renters by at least an additional \$15MM, with suggested allocations of \$5MM to be disbursed through Austin Public Health (APH) Neighborhood Services Unit and \$10MM to be disbursed through Housing and Planning Department (HPD) rental assistance programs. We recommend that these dollars be allocated from the general revenue and/or from applicable federal funds allocated to the city through whichever configuration results in the least and/or most flexible restrictions on expenditure to assure that economic relief most quickly reaches Austinites who will require it.

Rationale

Over the last year and half, the City’s RENT program has provided \$35MM in rental assistance to over 8,000 households. That is a tremendous feat! This funding source, along with food distribution, utility assistance, and many organizations and neighbors helping out residents in need have staved off thousands of evictions and reduced the likelihood of a family from falling into poverty. We cannot thank the city enough. However, two years later, Austin residents are still affected by the pandemic, compounded by high gas prices and high inflation. With food, household staples, and rents increasing, we cannot afford to lose sight of making sure our residents remain stably housed and able to financially meet life’s other demands.

In early March 2022, Travis County (TC) [announced](#) that \$9M of TC general revenue and ARPA funds will be used for rental assistance. This is in addition to the \$18MM TC has spent on rental assistance due to the impact of Covid-19. In less than a week, the county received nearly 4,700 applications, effectively forecasting complete extinguishment of that funding source. “Travis County recognizes there is still a great need for rental assistance. We remain committed to prioritizing and serving our most vulnerable communities,” said Pilar Sanchez, TC HHS. Even with this additional flow of assistance funds, March 1, 2022 marked the final expiration (per State statute) of Travis County’s moratorium on evictions.

We recommend that the city strive to continue to meet the need for assistance by providing \$5 to \$10M in additional rental/economic funding for residents, as the effect of the pandemic lingers for many Austin residents.

Date of Approval: April 12, 2022

Vote: A motion to provisionally approve the recommendation was approved on Commissioner Elias's motion, Commissioner Garrett's second, on a 11-0-0 vote.

Absent: Commissioners Tolliver, Deshotel and Sepeda

Against: None

Attest: *CDC Private Sector Appointee, Commissioner Kendra Garrett*

 _____ Date: 04/12/2022