

RESOLUTION NO. 20230816-016

WHEREAS, the Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC) is a justice diversion program that provides an alternative to the traditional criminal process, targeting low-level offenses frequently associated with poverty, lack of housing, substance use, and mental illness; and

WHEREAS, DACC's alternative adjudication options help prevent citations from becoming part of residents' criminal records, removing potential future barriers for housing and employment, and serves as a critical component of Austin's homelessness response system; and

WHEREAS, DACC's case managers provide housing-focused case management and resource navigation services to sign up individuals for public benefits and connect them with existing resources in the community; and

WHEREAS, one of the primary benefits of resolving court cases through DACC versus other courts is immediate access to services through DACC's Case Management staff; and

WHEREAS, DACC has a 'safe harbor' or 'no arrest' policy allowing defendants with active warrants to come to court to address their case(s) and engage in services without being arrested; and

WHEREAS, DACC's approach has resulted in financial savings to the City, from court resources to officer time, when people get connected to support, while reducing defaults and increasing the resolution of pending cases; and

WHEREAS, City Council approved Resolution No. 20230608-044 which in part, directed initiation of City Code amendments to expand DACC's jurisdiction

citywide to include Section 48.05 of the Texas Penal Code (Prohibited Camping) and covering DACC's top 10 case types; and

WHEREAS, it's anticipated that a City Code amendment to finalize the expansion of DACC's jurisdiction will be on a Council agenda in fall 2023; and

WHEREAS, mobile court operations in other communities, such as Fort Worth, Arlington and Grapevine have proven successful models for increasing appearance and compliance rates and proactively connecting individuals to services; and

WHEREAS, implementation of a DACC Mobile Court pilot (Pilot) would complement the forthcoming jurisdiction expansion by providing more geographically dispersed options for people to resolve their cases and have immediate access to services; and

WHEREAS, a Pilot could prioritize City owned and/or operated service centers, and other programs that are already serving community members who may have cases to resolve and/or which are providing homeless services; and

WHEREAS, by looking at existing resources and staffing across departments, while also exploring strategic partnerships with Travis County, Central Health, Integral Care, and other partners, a Pilot could be developed and implemented without additional funding allocation in Fiscal Year 2023-24; and

WHEREAS, local grassroots organizations and boots-on-the-ground community groups could provide an additional layer of support for individuals navigating the court process and accessing available services; and

WHEREAS, implementation of a Pilot would provide information regarding whether additional funding or resources would need to be identified in

the Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget process to ensure longevity of the program, if it proves to be a benefit to the Austin community; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

The City Manager is directed to develop and implement a DACC Mobile Court Pilot, with the following considerations:

- DACC mobile court operations should be able to connect individuals with solutions for resolving their case(s) and provide immediate connection to services through access to a case manager onsite;
- To ensure that individuals feel safe accessing DACC mobile court operations and to encourage them to proactively resolve pending cases, mobile court locations should have minimal visible law enforcement presence, and to the extent permitted by law, no person accessing DACC mobile court operations will be subject to arrest pursuant to a Class C misdemeanor warrant on or near mobile court locations;
- Locations should be prioritized to meet people where they already are in the community, such as libraries, neighborhood centers, community resource events, health fairs, and homeless service organizations;
- Pilot services should be strategically located in various geographical areas of Austin; and
- A public outreach campaign should be conducted in multiple languages, prioritizing the most commonly spoken languages among individuals with citations within DACC's jurisdiction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager should develop the Pilot utilizing existing resources and staffing across departments, while also exploring strategic partnerships with Travis County, Central Health, Integral Care, and other partners for potential collaborations and resource sharing opportunities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

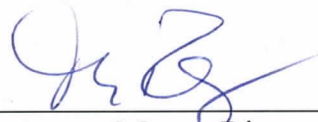
The City Manager is directed to engage local grassroots organizations and boots-on-the-ground community groups as key partners in the development and implementation of the DACC Mobile Court Pilot, and should include their involvement in the planning, execution, and evaluation stages, ensuring that these groups' lived insights, local knowledge, and unique capabilities are harnessed effectively for the betterment of the Austin community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to provide a DACC Mobile Court Pilot progress update to the City Council no later than February 19, 2024. If it's determined additional resources are needed for full program implementation after the Pilot, the City Manager is directed to bring funding options to Council for consideration as part of the Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget process.

ADOPTED: August 16, 2023

ATTEST:



Myrna Rios
City Clerk