



**HISPANIC/LATINO QUALITY-OF-LIFE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION 20230822-006:
MAINTAIN THE INDEPENDENT AUTONOMY OF THE EQUITY OFFICE, CIVIL
RIGHTS OFFICE, SMALL & MINORITY BUSINESS RESOURCES, OFFICE OF
SUSTAINABILITY, AND RESILIENCE OFFICE**

Date: August 27, 2023

Subject: Maintain the independent autonomy of the Equity Office, Civil Rights Office, Small & Minority Business Resources, Office of Sustainability, and Resilience Office

Motioned by: Commissioner Hanna Huang Seconded by: Commissioner Leonor Vargas

WHEREAS, in 2015, an analysis from the University of Toronto’s Martin Prosperity Institute ranked the City of Austin as the most economically segregated metro area in North America and a place where wealthy, college-educated professionals and less-educated, blue-collar workers are least likely to share the same neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, in response to this study, the City Council passed Resolution No. 20150507-027 in 2017, directing the City Manager to evaluate the impact of existing city policies and practices on racial equity and develop an Equity Assessment Tool to be used across city departments during different processes such as budgets, studies, programs, policies and such; and

WHEREAS, the Equity Office was created as an autonomous City entity in 2016 to focus on advancing equity in all aspects of city operations after over 150 community members dedicated more than 900 hours to designing the equity assessment tool and a definition of equity that could be operationalized across different city departments; and

WHEREAS, since 2016, the Equity Office has served as a model for other Equity Offices in different municipalities across the country and has created partnerships with many national organizations, including the Government Alliance on Race & Equity, Race Forward, Living Cities, National League of Cities; and

WHEREAS, as an autonomous government body, the Equity Office has implemented the Undoing Racism training, where they have trained staff from all city departments, including former Mayor Adler and former City Manager Spencer Cronk, and more than 200 organizations; and

WHEREAS, the Equity Office serves as an advisor to all quality of life commissions, ensuring there is equity in public processes, organizing the inclusion of boards & commissions in the budget process, and facilitating open conversations and community engagement; and

WHEREAS, more than \$1 million has been distributed through the Equity Office community mini-grant program that has been a catalyst for grassroots organizations working directly with residents who are directly impacted by immigration policies, homelessness, public safety, and housing, among others; and

WHEREAS, the Equity Office is currently leading or co-leading many city programs such as the Racial Equity Anti-displacement Tool, Family Stabilization Grant, Enhanced Library Card, the City Equity's Network, and the Black Dispossession Study, among many others; and

WHEREAS, the Equity Office is staffed with 13 FTEs, has a budget of \$2.9 million, is housed in a community-trusted Black-owned space in historic East Austin, and was created by the community to normalize, organize, and operationalize racial equity; and

WHEREAS, in July of this year, more than 50 organizations and over 100 residents from the City of Austin signed a petition and hosted a press conference asking the city council to maintain the Equity Office, Office of Suitability, and Resilience Office as an autonomous offices; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Joint Inclusion Commission recommends the Austin City Council direct the City Manager to keep the Equity Office, Civil Rights Office, Small & Minority Business Resources, Office of Suitability, and Resilience Office as independent offices as they have been operating.

Vote

Roll Call Vote: 7-0.

For: Commissioner Richard Bondi (Vice Chair), Commissioner Hanna Huang, Commissioner Rebecca Austen, Commissioner Melissa Ortega, Commissioner Leonor Vargas, Commissioner Morgan Davis, and Commissioner Jennifer Powell. .

Against: None.

Absent: Commissioner Amanda Afifi (Chair), Commissioner Serita Fontanesi,

Commissioner Julie Glasser

Attest: Richard Bondi, Vice Chair

Attest: Alejandra Mireles, Staff Liaison