



**Joint Sustainability Committee
RECOMMENDATION 20240228-014**

Date: February 28, 2024

Subject: Joint Sustainability Committee Budget Recommendations

- 1. Climate Equity Plan Project Manager:** The Austin Climate Equity Plan contains ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals and strategies to achieve those goals that touch every City department. Fully implementing the plan will reap great benefits to the City of Austin and its residents. The Office of Sustainability needs additional staff to track, report on, and coordinate this work to make the vision of the plan a reality. This position would be responsible for continually updating the Austin Climate Equity Plan Dashboard to reflect progress on each sub-strategy in the plan, including opportunities for the public to engage in the various initiatives (i.e. surveys, public meetings, working groups) and lists of NGOs engaging in various aspects of implementation. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that: one (1) Climate Equity Plan Project Manager be added to the Office of Sustainability. (est. \$150,000)**

Motioned By: Qureshi

Seconded By: Scott

Vote: 14-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser, Alberta Phillips

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 2. Outreach and Engagement for Sustainability Incentives:** The City of Austin has numerous sustainability incentive programs aligned with the goals of the Climate Equity Plan. However, many of these programs are underutilized, especially among low-income households. Additional community outreach by trusted organizations can increase the effectiveness of these programs. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that \$320,000 be allocated to the Office of Sustainability for:**
 - a. A Community Engagement Specialist (1 FTE) to coordinate community outreach and partnership activities associated with promoting the full suite of City of Austin sustainability incentives (i.e., home weatherization and repair, water conservation, rainwater collection, landscape and green infrastructure programs), with a focus on**

building relationships with low-income communities, communities of color, and related organizations and service providers. (est. \$120,000)

- b. **\$200,000 for grants, contracts, and stipends for community leaders and community-based organizations to do direct outreach to promote sustainability incentive programs in targeted Austin communities, in partnership with the Office of Sustainability.**

Motioned By: Qureshi

Seconded By: Scott

Vote: 14-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser, Alberta Phillips

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 3. **Sustainable Purchasing:** The City of Austin Climate Equity Plan Food & Product Consumption Goal 2 says “By 2030, greenhouse gas emissions from institutional, commercial, and government purchasing are reduced by at least 50%.” Strategy 2 to achieve that goal is “Strengthen the City’s sustainable purchasing program.” Recent analysis by the Office of Sustainability shows that over 80% of the City of Austin’s greenhouse gas emissions come from the products and services that the city purchases. It is essential that the City establish a comprehensive Sustainable Purchasing Plan that sets minimum standards for all products and services the City procures. And the City must prioritize ongoing staff support to educate all departments on sustainable purchasing and ensure that purchasing decisions comply with the Sustainable Purchasing Plan. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that:**
 - a. **\$125,000 be allocated to hire a sustainable purchasing contractor and/or purchase needed software and databases to develop a Sustainable Purchasing Plan that sets minimum standards for all products, materials and services purchased by the city; and**
 - b. **A full-time Sustainable Purchasing Director position should be added to the Purchasing Department. If an FTE is determined to be infeasible in this budget cycle, a temporary Sustainable Purchasing Director position should be established and funded. (est. \$170,000)**

Motioned By: Qureshi

Seconded By: Scott

Vote: 14-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser, Alberta Phillips

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 4. **Incentives and Education for Pro-Climate, Pro-Health Foods:** The City of Austin Climate Equity Plan Food & Product Consumption Goal 1 says “By 2030, ensure all Austinites can access a food system that is community driven, addresses food insecurity, prioritizes regenerative agriculture, supports dietary and health agency, promotes plant-based foods, and minimizes food waste.: Strategy 3 is to “Incentivize pro-climate, pro-health, food choices” with a variety of programs, including “Enhance[d] incentives to make pro-climate, pro-health food choices more affordable.” Due to the

large amount of resources that it takes to produce meat, dairy and eggs, reducing consumption of these foods is one of the most effective ways for people to reduce their impact on the climate and the environment in general. Plant-based alternatives are available, but many people aren't familiar with these foods or their benefits, and some plant-based foods can be more expensive. Thus, an education campaign and incentives are needed. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that: \$200,000 be allocated to the Office of Sustainability for a Pro-Climate Food Education and Incentive Program. These funds should be spent on a multi-lingual public education and marketing campaign to promote pro-climate/pro-health plant-based meat, dairy and egg alternatives, and identification of opportunities to provide effective incentives for pro-climate/pro-health foods at local restaurants and grocery stores. The Office of Sustainability and Austin Public Health should work together on the public education and marketing campaign.**

Motioned By: White

Seconded By: Rothrock

Vote: 12-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan, Alberta Phillips

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

Recuse: Charlotte Davis

- 5. Low carbon concrete:** The City of Austin Climate Equity Plan Goal 3 says: "By 2030, reduce the embodied carbon footprint of building materials used in local construction by 40%." Producing concrete emits CO₂ through energy required to produce it as well as the chemical process, and procuring the concrete we need to grow represents a significant portion of Austin's footprint: 78,700 metric tons in 2023, and construction has the highest impact on carbon in terms of total city spend. Growing Austin while reducing our carbon footprint thus requires the use of low concrete technology, but testing is required before scaling novel materials. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that \$150,000 be allocated to the Office of the City Engineer division of Austin Transportation and Public Works Department for:**
- a. **Field pour demonstrations using concrete containing a total cementitious content that is 50% or more decarbonized relative to a national ordinary Portland cement average embodied carbon intensity of .92 pounds of CO₂ per pound of cement, and**
 - b. **An intern to assist the Department of Engineers to procure and implement the cement testing.**

This work should be conducted in close coordination with the Office of Sustainability and Capital Delivery Services.

Motioned By: Davis

Seconded By: Qureshi

Vote: 14-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser, Charlotte Davis, Stephanie Bazan

Off Dais: Alberta Phillips

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 6. Sustainable Construction Procurement Coordinator:** The City of Austin has multiple departments that issue requests for proposals (RFPs) for building and other construction projects and purchase construction materials, including concrete. There is currently a lack of consistent emphasis on sustainable construction materials and practices. There is also a need for additional coordination and leadership to implement low-carbon concrete standards for City of Austin projects to reduce emissions as quickly as possible. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that: A new Sustainable Construction Procurement Coordinator position (1 FTE) be added within the Office of Sustainability to review RFPs and purchasing requests for construction materials and lead the coordination and development of a robust Low Carbon Concrete Plan that will reduce emissions in a timely manner. If a full-time position isn't granted, a temporary position should be added, although this will be an ongoing need, so a permanent position will serve the city best. (est. \$120,000)**

Motioned By: Davis

Seconded By: Qureshi

Vote: 14-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser, Charlotte Davis, Stephanie Bazan

Off Dais: Alberta Phillips

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 7. Implement a Passive and Embodied Carbon Reduction House Pilot Program:** The Passive House standard (developed by nonprofit Phius) is the most rigorous energy efficiency building code and provides dramatic reductions in energy use. Buildings meeting this standard are significantly more resilient, quieter, have better indoor air quality, and help the grid by reducing peak demand. This standard is now code minimum in many municipalities and is included in 20 states' affordable housing scoring metrics. Although some affordable housing developments have come close to meeting the Passive House standard, none have met it yet. In addition to reducing energy use in buildings, reducing the embodied carbon in the materials used in construction is also important. Conducting an embodied carbon analysis during the initial design phase of a building gives the developer an opportunity to select more sustainable building materials. A pilot program will provide financial assistance to achieve certification and collect data to demonstrate the value of achieving the Passive House standard and how to reduce embodied carbon in building materials, and should help drive the market toward utilizing Passive House more broadly. The Energy Efficiency Programs fee that all customers pay as part of their Austin Energy bills is intended to fund energy efficiency programs, such as this. A local Passive House incentive would help affordable housing developers maximize utilization of the Inflation Reduction Act 45L tax credit because projects certifying with Passive House also receive Zero Energy Ready Home certification and get \$5,000 per unit in tax credits. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that:**
- a. **\$2 million be allocated from the Energy Efficiency Programs fund for an Affordable Housing Passive House and Embodied Carbon Reduction Pilot Program to provide incentives to income-restricted affordable housing. Affordable housing projects that certify with Phius and conduct an embodied carbon analysis should be eligible for rebates, paid in three milestone payments during design (for hiring a consultant and committing to certification), construction (for precertification), and completion (for final certification). Projects should be required to share construction cost data, both hard and soft, and post-occupancy energy usage data.**
 - b. **The Austin Energy Green Building department should be allocated 1 additional FTE or temporary position to develop and administer the program, in close consultation with stakeholders. (est. \$90,000)**

Motioned By: Qureshi

Seconded By: Scott

Vote: 14-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser, Alberta Phillips

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 8. Electric Vehicles Needs Assessment:** The Equity Office should conduct an Electric Vehicles Needs Assessment in collaboration with a hired consultant, CapMetro, Austin Energy, and COA Departments of Transportation and Public Works, Public Health, Economic Development, and Office of Sustainability. The assessment should focus on the Eastern Crescent, including the Rundberg and Dove Springs areas. The assessment should build on community engagement and feedback (such as leveraging an Ambassadors program and partnering with entities such as Texas Electric Transportation Resources Alliance [TxETRA] education fund) to address mobility challenges in these regions and consider other electric mobility options such as buses, shuttles, neighborhood circulators carsharing. The Assessment should conclude with a report and presentation to JSC, COA Office of Sustainability, and key identified community members within one year of the budget approval. The report and presentation should include but is not limited to:
- a. Identifying the intersections of mobility challenges, transportation electrification, public health and racial and economic justice
 - b. Action items and recommended programs on how to achieve EV education and adoption focusing on overburdened communities, along with funding sources to implement the programs.
 - c. Identify major obstacles for EV adoption and corresponding action items to address the obstacles
 - d. A framework for EV education that focuses on clarifying the EV charging process, raising awareness about available incentives, and increasing community involvement by connecting systematically excluded groups with job and training/education opportunities in the EV field
 - e. Build on existing community assessments and recommendations such as Austin/Vamos Austin's (GAVA's) neighborhood circulators carsharing and TxETRA workshop on transportation justice in the EV Ecosystem
 - f. Status for achieving Austin's Climate Action Plan Transportation Electrification Goal 1 of 40% of total vehicle miles traveled in Austin electrified by 2030 and a description for a path to achieve this goal

The Joint Sustainability Commission recommends that the Equity Office be allocated an additional \$300,000 for the following Electric Vehicles Needs Assessment.

- a. **\$150,000 for a consultant to assist with the Assessment**
- b. **\$50,000 for the Equity Office to create a paid ambassador program to provide stipends to individuals and organizations that already have trust in the community to assist in the Assessment**
- c. **\$100,000 to pilot for four (4) recommended programs in on the Eastern Crescent, including the Rundberg and Dove Springs areas**

Motioned By: Campbell

Seconded By: Scott

Vote: 13-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan, Alberta Phillips

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 9. Heat Resilience Infrastructure:** Summer 2023 was [Austin's](#) and the [planet's](#) hottest summer on record, and future summers are expected to bring more extreme heat. Mitigating heat through increased shade provision and urban cooling strategies is vital given that it is the [deadliest weather hazard](#) in the US and negatively [impacts health, especially](#) for children, the elderly, low-income populations, communities of color, and outdoor workers. A recent assessment conducted by Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin (GAVA), the City of Austin, and the University of Texas found that extreme heat is already causing a slew of negative physical and mental health impacts in low-income Austin neighborhoods, and residents of these areas would like to see more trees, parks, water features, and water fountains to mitigate climate-related heat impacts. Providing shade and cooling in public spaces serves the [Austin Climate Equity Plan](#)'s overall goal of implementing equitable strategies in response to climate change. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that \$2,200,000 be allocated to the Office of Sustainability for:**
- a. **Natural and engineered shade and cooling solutions, including drought-tolerant tree plantings, shade structures at public and community facilities, shaded bus stops, shaded drinking fountains, and green infrastructure with cooling benefits. These interventions should prioritize low-income neighborhoods with high vulnerability to extreme heat.**
 - b. **A Resilient Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Coordinator (1 FTE) to identify and coordinate resilient infrastructure projects on city-owned property and in the right of way and coordinate dispersal of aforementioned funds to relevant projects led by other City departments. (est. \$120,000)**

Motioned By: Campbell

Seconded By: Scott

Vote: 13-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan, Alberta Phillips

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 10. Converting Impervious Cover to Functional Green:** The City of Austin Climate Equity Plan Natural Systems Goal 4 says “By 2030, include all City-owned lands under a management plan that results in neutral or negative carbon emissions and maximizes community co-benefits.” Strategy 2 to achieve this goal is “Reclaim public space and prioritize green infrastructure.” There is no inventory of the unnecessary impervious cover on City-owned lands, or a plan for converting those areas to functional green. Areas along city streets, in and around parking lots, at city buildings, and in city parks all need evaluation and a plan to remediate. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that \$200,000 be allocated to audit City-owned non-functional or unnecessary impervious cover, including surface-level parking lots, and develop a plan to convert an ambitious percentage of these to functional green uses as soon as practical.**

Motioned By: Qureshi

Seconded By: Scott

Vote: 13-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan, Alberta Phillips

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 11. No Mow Signage:** The City of Austin Climate Equity Plan Natural Systems Goal 4 says “By 2030, include all City-owned lands under a management plan that results in neutral or negative carbon emissions and maximizes community co-benefits.” Strategy 1 to achieve that goal says, “Prioritize carbon neutrality for public lands.” While Watershed Protection supports the Wildflower Meadow initiative and Grow Zone program, there is a need to educate communities to build support for these since areas mowed less frequently or not mowed are sometimes perceived as abandoned or not cared for. **The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that \$75,000 be allocated for permanent signage to show city land is not being neglected but rather managed for wildlife. Signage should be prioritized in low income and BIPOC neighborhoods, be bilingual and include visuals such as the example below.**



Motioned By: Qureshi

Seconded By: Scott

Vote: 13-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan, Alberta Phillips

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

- 12. Carbon-Neutral Public Lands:** The City of Austin Climate Equity Plan Natural Systems Goal 4 says “By 2030, include all City-owned lands under a management plan that results in neutral or negative carbon emissions and maximizes community co-benefits.” Strategy 1 to achieve that goal says, “Prioritize carbon neutrality for public lands.” However, there are significant challenges with implementing this strategy including:
- Parks and Recreation are missing functioning automated irrigation systems and lack staffing to hand water, which leads to inefficient and inadequate watering and the need to replace dead trees.
 - Horticulture has unfunded mandates for maintaining existing installations and areas like rain gardens.
 - Land Management has been turning down foundation funding and has budget savings due to inadequate staff to plan projects, initiate contracts and steward the funding.
- The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that:**
- \$250,000 be allocated for installation of efficient automated/drip irrigation on Parks and Recreation property with native trees and landscaping, with priority near underserved communities with lower access to nature in East Austin, using reclaimed water (purple pipe) wherever practical**
 - \$150,000 in additional annual funding be allocated for maintenance of existing installations and irrigation systems**
 - A full-time Program Manager position (1 FTE) be created and funded to plan City land management projects and identify and apply for funding to implement them. (est. \$150,000)**

Motioned By: Qureshi

Seconded By: Scott

Vote: 13-0

Yes: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Anna Scott, Jon Salinas, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Christopher Campbell, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Larry Franklin, Diana Wheeler, Melissa Rothrock, Amy Noel, Heather Houser

Off Dais: Stephanie Bazan, Alberta Phillips

Absent: Yure Suarez, Bertha Delgado

Attest:



Rohan Lilauwala, Staff Liaison