

RESOLUTION NO. 20240215-025

WHEREAS, climate change represents an existential threat to the City of Austin, the nation, and the planet; and

WHEREAS, to meet the threat level of the climate emergency and its effects on the community, the City must act urgently and expediently; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, Austin has experienced an increasing number of shocks in the form of natural- and human-driven disasters, as well as stresses that affect everyday vulnerabilities in the local community; and

WHEREAS, on August 8, 2019, the Council unanimously approved Resolution No. 20190808-078 declaring a climate emergency in the City and calling to accelerate the timeline for achieving the City's climate goals; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 20190808-078 directed the City Manager to promote interdepartmental coordination to ensure that existing emergency management plans offer an aligned approach to the threats of the climate crisis and natural hazards, including wildfire and flooding, and to identify where planning gaps may exist; and

WHEREAS, on September 30, 2021, Council approved the Austin Climate Equity Plan that provided 74 strategies to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Climate Equity Plan also established environmental justice goals to prioritize low-income communities and communities of color to remedy disproportionate harm; and

WHEREAS, concurrent with the Austin Climate Equity Plan, Council passed Resolution No. 20210930-110 prioritizing its implementation, requesting Code amendments and budget recommendations, and establishing a public dashboard and quarterly progress updates; and

WHEREAS, according to the last quarterly update in August 2022, three of 74 strategies are complete, 41 are underway, and many strategies require substantial investment to achieve; and

WHEREAS, by resolution, directed analysis or approved plans, the Council has previously directed the City Manager to take specific steps to advance Austin's climate change, sustainability, and resilience goals, including Water Forward, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, the Watershed Protection Strategic Plan, the Green Infrastructure Strengths and Gaps Assessment, Austin's Urban Forest Plan, the Austin Resource Recovery Comprehensive Plan, One Austin: Resilience Framework for Action, the Austin Energy Resource, Generation, and Climate Protection Plan, the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) Long Range Plan and Land Management Plan, Central Texas Regional Air Quality Plan, the Austin/Travis County Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan, and the Austin/Travis County Food Plan; and

WHEREAS, the programs and goals set forth in the City's plans would collectively make Austin more environmentally sustainable and develop the community resilience to adapt and address vulnerabilities to rapid climate change; and

WHEREAS, reducing electricity demand not only lowers greenhouse gas emissions, but also improves the reliability of the grid; and

WHEREAS, having local matching funds allows the City of Austin to maximize resources available under The Inflation Reduction Act, The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and other federal programs; and

WHEREAS, capital investments or program expenditures can be funded as a part of utility base rate calculations, general fund budgeting, general obligation debt financing, or a combination of sources; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

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

The City of Austin re-affirms its commitment to the target of net-zero community-wide emissions by 2040, as outlined in the 2021 Austin Climate Equity Plan, and to act with the urgency required to achieve this goal.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to solicit community input and prepare options and associated costs of capital improvements or programs that would reduce carbon emissions, decrease water usage, improve water quality and water detention, advance the sustainability of City operations, and improve community resiliency.

BE IT FURTHER RESOVLED:

The City Manager is further directed to post a public hearing of the Joint Sustainability Committee (Committee) in March and/or April 2024 to gather input from the public and the Committee is requested to submit any recommendations for investments to Council for consideration by May 1, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to review whether recommendations for investment from the Committee to address local causes of climate change, enhance the sustainability of City operations, and improve community resiliency to the impacts of extreme weather can be funded through utility rates and fees, general fund expenditures, grants, and/or bond instruments, including those that could be approved at a future election, including a November 2024 bond election.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

In addition to any proposals put forth by the Joint Sustainability Committee, the City Manager is directed to analyze the investments needed to reach any established goals in the following plans:

- Austin Climate Equity Plan
- Water Forward
- Watershed Protection Strategic Plan
- Green Infrastructure Strengths and Gaps Assessment
- Austin's Urban Forest Plan
- One Austin: The Climate Resilience Action Plan
- Austin Strategic Mobility Plan
- Austin Resource Recovery Comprehensive Plan
- Austin Energy Resource, Generation, and Climate Protection Plan
- PARD Long-Range Plan
- Recommended Land Management Strategies and Climate Vulnerability Analysis for Austin Parks and Recreation Department natural areas, otherwise known as the PARD Land Management Plan

- Austin/Travis County Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan
- Central Texas Regional Air Quality Plan
- Austin/Travis County Food Plan

This analysis should identify which investments have the option of being funded through utility rates and fees, general fund expenditures, grants, or bond instruments. The analysis should also identify options for fulfilling either all or specific elements of these plans before their current target date.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to identify capital improvements and programs that would maximize potential Inflation Reduction Act tax credits, and to develop a mechanism for reinvestment of reimbursement from such credits into similarly climate-focused capital improvements and programs, where appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Building on the work directed in the Austin Climate Equity Plan, Resolution No. 20210610-039, and the investment of American Plan Rescue Act funding to further food system resilience and fund the planning process for the Austin/Travis County Food Plan, the City Manager is further directed to include investment strategies for the implementation of the forthcoming Austin/Travis County Food Plan, especially land acquisition for farmland preservation and regenerative agriculture, along with other priorities, such as food processing facilities, alternative agricultural production such as vertical agriculture and hydro/aeroponics, direct-to-consumer market spaces, and other land- and capital-deficient food system needs identified by the City Manager.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to recommend investments the City Council should consider from the City of Austin’s 2022 State of the Food System Report and Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment, as well as the Central Texas Food System Dashboard, which is partially funded by the City of Austin.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to provide information detailing recommendations or actions taken to promote inter-departmental coordination to ensure that departments have an aligned approach to combating the threats of the climate crisis and natural hazards, including wildfire and flooding.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to present to the City Council on or before May 30, 2024, with an update of the Austin Climate Equity Plan dashboard, a combined inventory of plan recommendations, and a briefing or memo on applications and opportunities for federal funding relevant to an environmental investment plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to recommend a process for regularly updating Council on progress to address the climate emergency, including related investments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council sets a public hearing on May 30, 2024, to consider direction to the City Manager regarding the development of an environmental investment plan to address climate change, sustainability of City operations, and community resiliency.

ADOPTED: February 15, 2024 **ATTEST:** Stephanie Huel for
Myrna Rios
City Clerk