

RESOLUTION NO. 20240229-059

WHEREAS, soccer is a beloved sport in Austin by individuals regardless of age and cultural background; and

WHEREAS, Austin is one of only three Texas cities that hosts a major league soccer team, symbolizing its significance in the soccer landscape of the state; and

WHEREAS, Austin is home to the Q2 Stadium, the City's first major league sports stadium, which accommodates a variety of community and spectator events, including professional soccer events ranging from MLS to U.S. Women's National Team and U.S. Men's National Team matches; and

WHEREAS, a recent report that compared nearly 300 U.S. cities with at least one college or professional soccer team across five divisions ranked Austin as one of the best cities for soccer fans in America; and

WHEREAS, Austin is home to various recreational, developmental, semi-professional, and professional soccer leagues for women, men, and youth, including non-profit organizations that provide soccer programming for low-income and underserved youth; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department actively promotes soccer through scholarships and soccer programming for kids at city recreation centers and has participated in several soccer-related partnership projects, including partnerships with Austin FC, 4ATX Foundation, Soccer Assist and the US Soccer Foundation to refurbish an underutilized tennis court to a mini-pitch in Dove Springs District Park, Wooldridge School Park, and Civitan Neighborhood Park; and

WHEREAS, participation in soccer not only promotes physical fitness but also instills valuable life skills such as teamwork, communication, discipline, perseverance, and resilience, transcending cultural and social boundaries and enriching the lives of players; and

WHEREAS, despite the enthusiasm for soccer, challenges such as access to soccer fields, the cost of leagues and field maintenance, and a lack of transportation options have been identified by various stakeholders as major barriers to expanding access to soccer programming in Austin; and

WHEREAS, the lack of soccer field space in Austin makes it difficult to accommodate the city's numerous leagues and organizations, hosting tournaments and generating local revenue; and

WHEREAS, soccer is a source of economic development for the city, attracting visitors, fostering local business opportunities, and contributing to the city's vibrant sports landscape; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

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

The City Manager is instructed to begin a planning process to establish Austin as a Soccer City with the aim of promoting community benefits and economic growth and to cultivate a robust soccer culture and pipeline. As part of this planning process, the City Manager is directed to provide a report to Council that includes the following elements:

- An inventory of public land owned by the City, County, and school districts that is used or could be utilized to play soccer. The inventory should assess the conditions of the land, which fields are suitable for what level of play, the costs to adapt and/or maintain the land for

soccer purposes, and which fields currently provide open access to the public.

- An inventory of existing soccer programming, including soccer leagues, community and youth soccer programs.
- An assessment of all City of Austin Park Vision Plans to identify opportunities for soccer field development for all levels of play.
- An assessment of soccer fields and programming needs based on the size and population of our City and the number of existing soccer leagues, community, and youth soccer programs. This assessment should include recommendations to help address the existing need for soccer fields and soccer programming, including:
 - Fostering collaboration between the City, County, school districts and the soccer leagues and organizations in Austin.
 - Seeking public and private partnerships to expand public access to soccer facilities and programs and to attract new soccer sporting events to the City, including considering establishing an interest group coalition with appropriate stakeholder organizations.
 - Ways to increase the number of fields and parks that can be utilized to play soccer at all levels of play, including additional mini-pitches and fields for professional levels of play and tournaments.
 - Ways to expand the Parks and Recreation Department Financial Assistance for Youth Programs to increase program participation, including outreach efforts to promote the program and ways for residents to donate to the PARD Financial Aid Program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to work with the Parks and Recreation Department to update its athletics programs webpage to include a list of all publicly available soccer fields and mini pitches and any other relevant soccer-related information.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager should return to Council with the public land inventory, the needs analysis and recommendations to address challenges by September 2024. The City Manager is further directed to review whether the recommendations to address the identified challenges, including park maintenance and soccer field development, could be funded through general fund expenditures and/or bond instruments to be approved at a future election.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to ensure any future soccer field development is considerate of and balanced with existing needs for park improvements.

ADOPTED: February 29, 2024 **ATTEST:** Stephanie Hall for
Myrna Rios
City Clerk