



## **BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

### **Resource Management Commission**

### **Recommendation No. 20240319-003**

### **Resolution Passive House Design Challenge**

WHEREAS, the City of Austin recognizes the critical need for sustainable and affordable housing solutions to address the diverse housing challenges faced by our community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin, in alignment with its commitment to climate action, has established a comprehensive Climate Equity Plan aimed at addressing environmental and social inequities in the community; and

WHEREAS, the City's Climate Equity Plan includes a goal of reaching net-zero GHG emissions by 2040 and a goal of achieving net-zero carbon for new buildings and reducing emissions by 25% for existing buildings by 2040; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has also developed a robust Climate Resilience Action Plan, outlining strategies to enhance the resilience of the community in the face of climate change impacts; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin seeks to encourage and support the development of affordable housing projects that adhere to the highest standards of energy efficiency, sustainability, and equity;

WHEREAS, passive houses are the world's most energy-efficient standard and are designed so that most of the air exchange with the exterior is done by controlled ventilation through a heat exchanger to minimize heat loss; and

WHEREAS, passive building design can help keep a building cool in hot and humid climates through several strategies including shading, insulation, ventilation, orientation, and shape; and

WHEREAS, passive house design saves significantly on heating and cooling compared to traditional buildings, and over 25% compared to average new builds which help reduce energy costs and create a smaller carbon footprint; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, Vancouver took an important first step toward their goal of becoming the greenest city in the world, as the first jurisdiction in North America to go beyond green building codes and use architecture itself through passive design to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs); and

WHEREAS, starting in 2024, the City of Boston adopted a set of sustainability standards that required every new multifamily building to meet passive building requirements,

WHEREAS, in the past years New York City, Chicago, and several states including Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut have also instituted passive building requirements; and

WHEREAS, although no southern state or city has adopted passive building standards to date, a study performed by Science Direct showed that passive building strategies in warm humid climates can achieve substantial energy and cost savings over standard building techniques; and

WHEREAS, sustainable building practices contribute significantly to energy efficiency, reduced environmental impact, and long-term affordability; and

WHEREAS, innovative programs such as the Passive House Design Challenge, as demonstrated by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, have successfully incentivized and promoted the construction of energy-efficient and affordable housing units; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Resource Management Commission recommends that City Council directs the City Manager to explore a passive building pilot program that includes the following:

1. A pilot program, limited to three or four projects which incentivizes affordable housing projects to achieve certification from the Passive House Institute US (PHIUS).
2. Explore a financial incentive for these projects similar to those demonstrated in the Passive House Design Challenge established by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center.
3. Provide annual reports to the City Council on the progress and impact of the program, including the number of projects certified, energy savings achieved, and any adjustments or improvements recommended.
4. Provide a request to council for additional resources if needed to complete the pilot program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Resource Management Commission recommends that City Council direct the City Manager to monitor the success and efficacy of the passive building pilot and if deemed successful, provide council with a recommendation to expand the building standards city-wide.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Resource Management Commission recommends that City Council direct the City Manager to report back to council yearly starting in 2026 on the progress of this pilot.

**Vote:** 7-0-1

**For:** Commissioner Paul Robbins, Vice Chair; Commissioner Melissa Carugati; Commissioner Charlotte Davis; Commissioner Trey Farmer; Commissioner GeNell Gary; Commissioner Shane Johnson; Commissioner Alison Silverstein

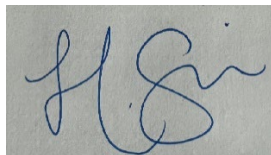
**Against:** None

**Abstentions:** Commissioner Dino Sasaridis

**Off Dais:** None

**Absences:** Commissioner Louis Stone, Chair; Commissioner Chelsey Scaffidi

**Vacancies:** Mayor



**Attest:**

Natasha Goodwin, Staff Liaison