



## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20240320-003

**Date:** March 20, 2024

**Subject:** Budget Recommendations from the Joint Sustainability Committee

**Motion by:** David Sullivan

**Second by:** Richard Brimer

**WHEREAS**, the Environmental Commission recognizes the Joint Sustainability Committee has considered these items based on requests for input from the Austin City Council,

**WHEREAS**, these items all would contribute to more sustainable growth and environmental benefits for Austin.

**THEREFORE**, the Environmental Commission recommends the following budget items, as recommended by the Joint Sustainability Committee.

1. One (1) Climate Equity Plan Project Manager be added to the Office of Sustainability. (est. \$150,000)
2. \$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.
3. Regarding the Sustainable Purchasing Plan:
  - 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;
  - 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)
4. \$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 proclimate/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.

5. \$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 CO<sub>2</sub> per pound of cement,
  - 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.
6. 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)
7. Implement a Passive and Embodied Carbon Reduction House Pilot Program:
  - 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 postoccupancy 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)
8. 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
9. \$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)
10. \$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.

11. \$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.



12. Carbon-Neutral Public Lands:
- a. \$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
  - b. \$150,000 in additional annual funding be allocated for maintenance of existing installations and irrigation systems
  - c. 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)

**Vote: 6-0**

For: Perry Bedford, Richard Brimer, Jennifer Bristol, Hanna Cofer, Mariana Krueger, and David Sullivan

Against: None

Abstain: Colin Nickells

Absent: Peter Einhorn, Haris Qureshi, Melinda Schiera, and Kevin Ramberg

Attest:

Elizabeth Funk, Environmental Commission Liaison