



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Commission on Aging

Recommendation Number: (20240313-5): Commission on Aging FY25 City of Austin Budget Recommendations

Outreach for Emergency Preparedness

WHEREAS, persons aged 65 and older represent the fastest-growing age group in Austin, expanding from 55,695 (7.0% of 2010 population) to 91,733 (9.5% of 2020 population), and growing at a rate of 64.7%; and

WHEREAS, feedback most often received is that Austinites, including older adults lack knowledge about where to find information related emergency preparedness, and often find themselves unprepared; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, the winter storms and their aftermath raised concerns about reaching the "harder to reach" older citizens with timely information and assistance, indicating the need for a multi-modal approach to sharing information with older adults and their family caregivers; and

WHEREAS, a multi-modal approach to communication would require print, digital and face-to-face communications with attention to language access and access to individuals with disabilities. And in order to be effective, this approach would require earmarked funding for the Age Friendly Coordination team at Austin Public Health; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on Aging has identified emergency preparedness as a key priority requiring ongoing multi-modal outreach and communication multiple times each year to ensure consistent messaging and timely public awareness of essential programs and services related to preparedness for older individuals and family caregivers; and

WHEREAS, community engagement with older individuals during Older Americans Month and needs assessment activities are essential to the overall public awareness of the growing population of older Austinites and their needs will require additional funding; and

WHEREAS, existing effective multi-modal outreach campaigns cost approximately \$5,000 per campaign, proposed funding needs will be \$30,000 for multiple emergency preparedness campaigns, Older Americans Month, and ongoing community needs assessment activities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging encourages the Austin City Council to earmark and allocate \$30,000 to support Age Friendly Plan activities, to be allocated to multiple public awareness and educational outreach events related to informing older adults in the Austin area of emergency procedures and ongoing emergency preparedness planning for older adults and their family caregivers.

Support for GO Repair Program

WHEREAS, those aged 65 years and older, represent the fastest-growing age group in Austin, expanding from 55,695 (7.0% of 2010 population) to 91,733 (9.5% of 2020 population), and growing at a rate of 64.7%; and

WHEREAS, the Age-Friendly Austin Community Feedback Survey indicates that 74% of older city residents surveyed want to age in-place for as long as possible and respondents cited needing increased assistance for home repairs and maintenance in order to stay in their homes; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has funded the GO Repair program with General Obligation bonds that helps low-income homeowners fix serious structural issues like accessibility accommodations, electrical and mechanical repairs, drywall, flooring, siding repairs and more, allowing homeowners to safely stay in their homes with the repair assistance channeled through area nonprofits; and

WHEREAS, the current year's funding of \$5 million will assist over 200 households and will run out before the year is over because of strong demand for the program (current waitlists top 250).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging encourages the Austin City Council to allocate continued General Obligation bond funding and explore all available additional funding avenues to fund the GO Repair program at a more adequate level that will allow the program to continue uninterrupted for all of FY25 (\$10-15 million).

Gus Garcia Recreation Center Temporary Expansion Space

WHEREAS, persons aged 65 and older represent the fastest-growing age group in Austin, expanding from 55,695 (7.0% of 2010 population) to 91,733 (9.5% of 2020 population), and growing at a rate of 64.7%; and

WHEREAS, the Asian American population was the fastest-growing race/ethnicity group among the Austin older population. The Asian American older population more than doubled from 2,051 in 2010 to 4,829 in 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Gus Garcia Recreation Center currently serves a large percentage of Asian American older adults, aged 65 and older; and

WHEREAS, 2023¹ participants at of all ages have increased significantly at the Gus Garcia Recreation Center over pre-pandemic levels:

- Youth Programs 107%+ over 2019 levels
- Teen Programs 433%+ over 2019 levels
- Adult Programs 612% over 2019 levels
- Older Adult Programs 295% over 2019 levels; and

WHEREAS, the physical space at the Gus Garcia Recreation Center is filled to capacity, with classes frequently having to occur in the lobby or programs being cancelled; and

WHEREAS, due to space limitations, the older adult activities are severely curtailed during the months when the Summer Youth Programs are in operation, preventing expansion of adult and older adult programs that enrich the lives of adults and older adults; and

WHEREAS, PARD is recommending expansion of the Gus Garcia Recreation Center to accommodate the vibrant and ethnically diverse older adult community that currently utilize the location; and

WHEREAS, any permanent expansion will require a bond issue, which will likely delay opening of an expanded facility until 2028 at best.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging encourages the Austin City Council to allocate \$30,000 annually for a 12' x 60' temporary space at the Gus Garcia Recreation Center to continue to encourage the participation of the diverse older adult community at that location.

Expansion of Emergency Housing and Rental Assistance Program

WHEREAS, those aged 65 years and older, represent the fastest-growing age group in Austin, expanding from 55,695 (7.0% of 2010 population) to 91,733 (9.5% of 2020 population), and growing at a rate of 64.7%; and

WHEREAS, Austin continues to face a housing affordability crisis, particularly impacting renters that have seen multiple years of rental increases, and

WHEREAS, the Age-Friendly Austin Community Feedback Survey indicates that older city residents want to age in-place for as long as possible and respondents who are experiencing unstable housing cited this was due to lack of affordability and gentrification; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has provided funding for the RENT program, now referred to as "I Belong in Austin" which has successfully provided renters emergency assistance for rent, moving, and storage/relocation to prevent eviction, displacement, and homelessness; and

¹ These are incomplete counts for 2023 program participants at the Gus Garcia Recreation Center.

WHEREAS, I Belong in Austin served a significant number of Austin individuals over 60 (14% of the total served) and continues to have an extensive waitlist, over 800 people when the program began this year and quickly grow to 4,000 before being capped indicating the continuing need for assistance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging encourages the Austin City Council to allocate \$15 million to support I Belong in Austin in the next fiscal year based on an evaluation of the program's effectiveness in mitigating the affordability crisis and accomplish strategic goals related to housing stabilization, economic opportunity, and affordability.

Additional Immunization Funding

WHEREAS, persons aged 65 and older represent the fastest-growing age group in Austin, expanding from 55,695 (7.0% of 2010 population) to 91,733 (9.5% of 2020 population), and growing at a rate of 64.7%; and

WHEREAS, Austin Public Health Immunizations Unit aims to provide a vaccine safety net for vulnerable Travis County Residents; and

WHEREAS, Adults - in particular older adults, as noted the fastest growing age group in Austin, with the Asian older population exhibiting the fastest growth--have limited options for free and low-cost vaccinations in Austin/Travis County; and

WHEREAS, the Adult Safety Net (ASN) program removed the shingles vaccine (Shingrix) in September of 2021 due to lack of funds; and

WHEREAS, the ASN program removed the pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine (PCV20) in August of 2023 due to lack of funds; and

WHEREAS, both of these vaccines are primarily recommended for older adults, with Shingrix being recommended for adults over 50 only; and

WHEREAS, the APH Immunizations Unit purchased and administered over 900 shingles vaccines at a cost of approximately \$180,000 including 300 shingles vaccines purchased so far in FY24 at a cost of \$59,360; and

WHEREAS, since August 2023 the APH Immunizations Unit purchased and administered over 170 doses of pneumococcal vaccine for a total of \$44,465; and

WHEREAS, the above purchases of these two vaccines have all been administered, the APH Immunizations Unit no longer has quantities available as a safety net for vulnerable residents; and

WHEREAS, after the above dosages were administered, there's an additional estimated unmet need of 3,500 Shingrix doses annually, representing 1,750 clients annually (Shingrix is a two-dose series); and

WHEREAS, after the above dosages were administered, there's an additional estimated unmet need of 2,200 Pneumococcal vaccine doses annual, representing 2,200 clients annually; and

WHEREAS, pricing for Shingrix vaccine is \$1,862.19 for 10 doses as of 3/4/24; and

WHEREAS, pricing for the PCV20 vaccine is \$2,437.18 for 10 doses as of 3/4/24.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging encourages the Austin City Council to earmark and allocate \$308,500 for the purchase of 1,000 additional Shingrix shingles (at two doses per person) and 500 additional PCV20 vaccines to help support at risk older adults in the Austin area.

Pedestrian Signaling

WHEREAS, persons aged 65 and older represent the fastest-growing age group in Austin, expanding from 55,695 (7.0% of 2010 population) to 91,733 (9.5% of 2020 population), and growing at a rate of 64.7%; and

WHEREAS, the Age-Friendly Austin Community Feedback Survey indicates 23% of respondents were living with disability, including persons with physical issues, persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, and persons with; and persons with psychiatric or mental health issues, etc; and

WHEREAS, Leading Pedestrian Interval signals (LPIs) adjust traffic signal timing to allow pedestrians to enter the cross walk five (5) to seven (7) seconds before vehicles get a green signal, allowing drivers in turn lanes to better identify the pedestrians before vehicles are allowed to turn; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Austin Transportation Department (ATD), through collaboration with ATD Vision Zero staff, traffic signal engineers and public information staff installed LPIs at 110 intersections in Austin's downtown/Central Business District to improve pedestrian safety in the city's most active pedestrian zone; and

WHEREAS, ATD conducted a survey following implementation to gauge early project feedback on the LPI installations and found that, "87% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safer crossing streets because they had a head start due to the LPI and 60% agreed or strongly agreed that they are more likely to use a crosswalk knowing that it has an LPI."

WHEREAS, Audible Pedestrian Signals (APSSs), pedestrian hybrid beacons and countdown clocks provide important feedback to pedestrians, making them aware of the remaining duration of a walk light and enabling them to make better determinations on completing a safe crossing; and

WHEREAS, City of Austin staff have cited up to a 25% crash reduction at certain intersections that received countdown clocks.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends that the Austin Transportation Department continue data driven approaches and inter-department collaboration to identify and implement Leading Pedestrian Interval signals at locations outside of downtown that are adjacent to pedestrian attractors for older adults to promote the safe pedestrian travel and healthy aging of older adults.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends the Austin Transportation Department expand the installation of audible pedestrian signals, pedestrian hybrid beacons and countdown clocks at additional intersections across the city that need pedestrian safety improvements and that are adjacent to pedestrian attractors for older adults and that the Austin Transportation Department continues to use a data driven approach to identifying additional key locations across the city where these signals will be best-utilized.

Equity Office Funding

WHEREAS, persons aged 65 and older represent the fastest-growing age group in Austin, expanding from 55,695 (7.0% of 2010 population) to 91,733 (9.5% of 2020 population), and growing at a rate of 64.7%; and

WHEREAS the latest City of Austin Planning Department show Austin residents are 48% white, 32% Hispanic/Latina/o/x, 8% Asian/Asian American, 7% Black/African American, and 4% Multiracial; and

WHEREAS, a recent survey by the City of Austin Office of Police Oversight indicated 22% of respondents identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community; and

WHEREAS, the Age-Friendly Austin Community Feedback Survey indicates 23% of respondents were living with a disability; and

WHEREAS, while not an all-inclusive list, all of the demographics specified above are at risk for discrimination and being targeted, generally the older adults in those populations are the most vulnerable; and

WHEREAS, in the last twelve months, the City of Austin has seen an increase in discrimination, targeting and persecution of multiple ethnicities; and

WHEREAS, the Equity Office mission is “To provide leadership, guidance, and insight on equity to improve the quality of life for Austinites and achieve the vision of making Austin the most livable city in the nation for ALL;” and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Equity Office is currently operating without a permanently appointed Equity Officer; and

WHEREAS, there are initiatives within the City of Austin to consolidate the Equity Office with other group(s).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging encourages the Austin City Council to act to maintain the autonomy of the Equity Office and further, to ensure adequate funding to hire and maintain an Equity Officer, and to designate adequate resources to Austin residents who may be experiencing discrimination, marginalization, hate crimes or persecution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging encourages the Austin City Council to support the Equity Office’s ongoing work to address the needs of Austinites and continue to

convey that equity in Austin remains a high priority by retaining the Equity Office's originally chartered autonomy.

Parks & Recreation Funding

WHEREAS, persons aged 65 and older represent the fastest-growing age group in Austin, expanding from 55,695 (7.0% of 2010 population) to 91,733 (9.5% of 2020 population), and growing at a rate of 64.7%; and

WHEREAS, one main focus of the Commission on Aging is furthering Austin's Age Friendly Action Plan; and

WHEREAS, Austin's Age Friendly Action Plan includes an Outdoor Spaces component, indicating people need public places to gather — indoors and out. Green spaces, seating, and accessible buildings (elevators, zero-step entrances, and ramps) can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. Age-friendly communities might require buildings to follow Universal Design Guidelines, a relatively new concept meaning building for people of all abilities including wheelchair users; and

WHEREAS, Austin's Age Friendly Action Plan includes a Social Participation component, indicating that Parks and Recreation Departments as well as local libraries are often the champions of social participation, recreation, and engagement for every community. These two agencies provide multi-generational programs as well as programs geared for specific ages. Their programs are critical for those who may feel the debilitating effects of isolation. Loneliness can be combated by creating opportunities to socialize and the availability of accessible, affordable, and fun social activities; and

WHEREAS, Austin's Age Friendly Action Plan includes a Work and Civic Engagement Spaces component, indicating that an age-friendly community encourages older people to be actively engaged in community life and has opportunities for residents to work for pay or volunteer their skills and that city parks are an excellent location for civic engagement and community engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) has been the steward of the City of Austin's public lands since 1928. As such, PARC protects and maintains parkland, preserves trails, and offers a variety of sports, recreation, educational enrichment, arts programs, cultural opportunities, nature and aquatic activities; and

WHEREAS, only half of PARC sites have full-time administrative support, which creates inconsistency for customers and disrupts service due to high turnover however, consistent, dedicated site specialists are crucial for building relationships and providing seamless customer experiences with PARC's complex system; and

WHEREAS, additional funding is crucial to avoid diverting resources from core programs and ensure compliance with safety regulations (NFPA 10, Texas Fire Code); and

WHEREAS, standardizing PARC's marketing processes is crucial for consistent, high-quality materials across its PARC's diverse team; and

WHEREAS, increased use of Community Recreation athletic fields, including youth sports and adult leagues, has strained their condition and increased youth sports participation (14% growth) further highlights the need; and

WHEREAS, improved field conditions (lighting, irrigation, fencing) have attracted even more demand from both adult leagues and the public; and

WHEREAS, PARD coordinates with Austin's Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) to provide cold weather shelters (CWS) and emergency shelters when temperatures drop, averaging thirteen (13) CWS days and five (5) emergency shelter days annually; and

WHEREAS, the coordination of these services with HSEM aligns with Council's top priority to address homelessness (Austin Action Plan) and audit recommendations; and

WHEREAS, these shelters require temporary staff, cleaning supplies, and food/drinks, which are currently diverting funds from PARD's community recreation programs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends the following to ensure consistent service to Austin's growing population, PARD requests, 4 new full-time administrative specialist positions (\$332,328), conversion of 6 part-time administrative assistants to full-time (\$75,878), reclassification of administrative assistants to specialists (\$158,546) for equitable standards.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends \$107,000 for Community Recreation and Centralized Programs annually to cover mandatory maintenance and inspections (HVAC, ADA, fire safety) for their 23 facilities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends the addition of four (4) Marketing Representative A positions to boost effectiveness, brand recognition, and reach marginalized communities at a cost of \$369,979. These positions will handle social media, web content, campaigns, and community engagement, ensuring a cohesive Parks and Recreation Department brand.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends funding in the amount of \$140,809 for necessary ballfield and maintenance improvement to address aeration, pesticide, herbicide, topsoil, and fertilization to maintain safe fields year-round.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends that PARD expenses for operating CWS are funded through City of Austin Homeland Security and Emergency Management budget, to ensure the quality of both shelter operations and essential recreation services for Austin residents.

Budget Reporting

WHEREAS, the City of Austin's Boards and Commissions are tasked with making annual budget recommendations to City Council; and

WHEREAS, there is currently not a central, easily accessible, publicly available repository for board and commission budget recommendations; and

WHEREAS, there is currently not a central, easily accessible, publicly available way to track the status of board and commission recommendations within a fiscal year, or year over year; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin's Boards and Commissions serve as a liaison between city government and community members, using community guidance to inform council budget recommendations, and council budget decisions to educate community members on council priorities; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin's Boards and Commissions experience term limits, transitions in leadership as well as membership, and changing priorities, all of which lead to a loss in institutional knowledge; and

WHEREAS, Austin is the state capital, home of the state's legislature, many of the legislature's staff, and local as well as state policy advocates; and

WHEREAS, it is reasonable that our city has the talent, skills, and resources necessary to develop a board and commission recommendation budget tracker.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission on Aging recommends funding and staffing to create a digital, user friendly, publicly available board and commission budget recommendation tracker.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this digital tracker can be as simple as a regularly updated excel spreadsheet on the board and commission's website, or as robust as the Texas Legislature Online Bill Lookup website dependent on available funding and staff capacity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this digital tracker will be a resource for budget recommendations for each fiscal year, starting with the FY2024 budget cycle.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this digital tracker will provide a brief summary of each recommendation with a link to the full recommendation, status update of where in the budget processes it is (submitted, under review by council, etc.), and a final outcome (accepted, rejected, modified, etc.), including any revised versions of the original recommendation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this digital tracker will be a tool to increase transparency and engagement in the budget process amongst boards and commissions, city council, and the communities across Austin, furthering a shared goal of government that works for all.

Record of the Vote for Recommendation 20240313-5: Approved by Commission on Aging on a vote of 8-0 with two abstentions by Commissioners Angel and Van de Putte.

Attest: 
Halana Kaleel, Staff Liaison