

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the City and Council have long prioritized public input and continuous public engagement on issues critical to the well-being of Austinites; and

WHEREAS, the City has pioneered and routinely offers several methods for community involvement and engagement, including in-person and virtual meetings, focused discussions, topic-specific open houses, pop-up resource fairs, digital and print fliers, direct mailers, various surveys, and online engagement platforms; and

WHEREAS, the City has an increasingly diverse constituency that requires an assortment of communication methods to inform and engage as many Austinites as possible so the City and Council take actions that best represent the needs of the Austin community; and

WHEREAS, with the introduction of the 10-1 single-member district representative system ten years ago, the City has evolved with its needs for engagement on both city-wide and district-level engagement; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the first 10-1 City Council's community-led Task Force on Community Engagement issued the Task Force on Community Engagement Report, which serves as the foundation for the City's community outreach and engagement efforts; and

WHEREAS, the goals of descriptive representation with a district-based council system were anchored in the belief that different parts of the City have different needs and require unique representation for those needs; and

25 **WHEREAS**, having a uniform program across council districts to provide
26 reoccurring, iterative public engagement led by skilled City staff and community
27 partners could allow for the development of new and innovative ideas to rise to the
28 level of council discussions; and

29 **WHEREAS**, inequities in the availability of time, resources, and
30 institutional familiarity can inhibit the participation of some Austinites in
31 traditional engagement activities such as testifying at council meetings,
32 commission meetings, or virtual options; and

33 **WHEREAS**, focused engagement that relies on a diversity of strategies
34 could allow for individuals with a variety of experiences and familiarity with City
35 subject matters to participate in more familiar and approachable settings than a
36 town hall, board meeting, or commission meeting; and,

37 **WHEREAS**, townhalls and other highly visible forms of community
38 engagement may not be the best methods to encourage voices who are unfamiliar
39 or new to face-to-face local government participation; and

40 **WHEREAS**, community members often have questions for council offices
41 that are more effectively answered by staff who have expertise or greater
42 institutional knowledge; and

43 **WHEREAS**, innovations brought about during the pandemic in areas of
44 community engagement could allow Austinites to be more quickly connected with
45 City staff or other experts while at community meetings; **NOW THEREFORE**,

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

47 The City Manager is directed to provide findings and recommendations on
48 how to support and expand existing community engagement programs to allow for

greater levels of engagement in each council district, with regular occurring events and outreach for Austinites to learn how to navigate City processes and departments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to identify needs or additional resources for programs such as:

- CityWorks Academy;
- SpeakUp Austin;
- Conversation Corps;
- Youth Initiative Program; and
- public comment at city council meetings and board and commission meetings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to explore and implement strategies aimed at enhancing user-friendly and accessible online public engagement offerings. This exploration should prioritize the development of digital platforms and tools that facilitate robust participation from all Austinites, including those facing barriers to traditional engagement methods.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Community events should be coordinated across multiple departments and offer a welcoming, comfortable space to learn more and feel safe engaging in civic dialogue by including elements such as opportunities to interact with departmental

staff and council members, interpretation services as needed, family friendly activities, and, when possible, refreshments and supervised children's activities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to evaluate piloting the expansion of civic engagement programs like CityWorks Academy and the Youth Initiative Program that include facility tours for the enrichment of students and the public alike. These programs should continue offering educational experiences that provide insight into the functions of local government, highlight the importance of civic engagement, and foster a deeper understanding of City operations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Facility tours should include:

- all ages;
- tours of relevant facilities;
- age-appropriate presentations about the roles of City staff;
- robust interaction with staff, when possible;
- educational civics activities; and
- refreshments, as needed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to identify any additional resources or staffing requirements in order to achieve the goals of this resolution.

ADOPTED: _____, 2024 **ATTEST:** _____
Myrna Rios
City Clerk