

RESOLUTION NO. 20241121-073

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is committed to promoting environmental sustainability and biodiversity as a key part of its climate resilience and sustainability initiatives; and

WHEREAS, Texas is recognized nationally and internationally for its important migration corridors for birds, with approximately one of every three birds migrating through the U.S. in the spring, and one of every four birds migrating through the U.S. in the fall, or nearly two billion birds, passing through every year; and

WHEREAS, tourism generated from bird-watching brings more than \$1.8 billion into the state's economy annually; and

WHEREAS, bird populations face significant threats from collisions with buildings, particularly due to glass structures and night lighting, which result in one billion bird fatalities every year from collisions with manmade structures in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Audubon Texas initiated the *Lights Out, Texas!* campaign of education, awareness, and action that focuses on protecting the billions of migratory birds traveling through Texas; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 20210902-050 previously directed the City Manager to initiate a program to turn off non-essential lighting in City buildings where feasible during peak fall and spring bird migration periods; and

WHEREAS, Audubon Texas and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department created the Bird City Texas campaign to promote science-based bird conservation initiatives and community-centric action; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin became a Bird City in 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Travis Audubon Society has been a leading conservation organization in Travis County since 1952, and in 2024, they contracted with bird-friendly design expert Heidi Trudell to present a report on bird friendly building design to the South-Central Waterfront Commission, Design Commission and Environmental Commission; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in partnership with the American Bird Conservancy, DarkSky International, and Yale University has developed Bird-Friendly Building Toolkits that provide strategies and guidelines for designing and retrofitting low-rise, mid-rise and high-rise buildings to reduce bird collisions through the use of bird-friendly materials, lighting strategies, landscaping, and architectural designs; and

WHEREAS, cities across the United States, including New York, Madison, San Francisco and twenty-three other cities, have successfully adopted bird-friendly building standards, demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of such measures; and

WHEREAS, the integration of bird-friendly building design supports Austin's existing efforts to protect wildlife habitats, promote urban biodiversity and sustainable development practices and provides an opportunity to lead by example in environmental stewardship; and

WHEREAS, following the bird-friendly design presentation the Environmental Commission formed a working group to understand best-practices and make a recommendation to implement those practices; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

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

The City Manager is directed to provide an update to Council about the City's implementation efforts regarding Lights Out, a City-wide initiative that aims to raise awareness of the risk of light pollution for migrating birds. This update should include information regarding:

- 1) efforts to expand the initiative to other City facilities outside of the downtown area;
- 2) results of collaborations with external stakeholders to communicate with private building owners on how they can incorporate bird friendly design features and practices; and
- 3) use of the City's social media channels to communicate messages about the initiative and encouraging businesses to minimize the use of interior and exterior lighting during peak migration season.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to explore the integration of bird-friendly building techniques, as outlined in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Bird-Friendly Building Toolkit, into the City's rules and regulations. Additionally, the City Manager shall identify specific measures that can be adopted for construction of new low-rise, mid-rise and high-rise buildings to reduce bird collisions, including, but not limited to:

- Incorporating bird-friendly building design features such as etched or fritted glass, applied window films that reduce reflection and make windows more visible to birds, or other design elements such as screens, awnings, and landscape features; and

- Creating lighting design standards to minimize the amount of nighttime light pollution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:


The City Manager is further directed to conduct a feasibility analysis on the potential impacts of these standards on development costs and timelines, and to seek input from stakeholders, including developers, environmental organizations, and the public.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager shall report back to the City Council with recommendations on specific City Code amendments or guidelines that would be appropriate no later than June 1, 2025.

ADOPTED: November 21, 2024

ATTEST:


Myrna Rios
City Clerk