BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION
Downtown Commission

Recommendation Number_____:
Prepare for the Reinstallation and Preservation of Rainbow Sidewalks and Pedestrian Infrastructure on 4th Street

Recommendation:

WHEREAS, Downtown Austin's 4th Street district, including the Bettie Naylor Corridor, has served for decades as the historic, cultural, and communal epicenter of Central Texas's LGBTQ+ community, providing a vital safe harbor, economic engine, and gathering space; and

WHEREAS, The City of Austin originally authorized and installed rainbow pedestrian treatments at 4th and Colorado Streets to honor this civil rights history, commemorate local LGBTQ+ trailblazers, and outwardly project the City's core values of equality, inclusivity, and public safety for all residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, The rainbow flag and its colors are globally recognized symbols within the LGBTQ+ movement representing visibility, dignity, acceptance, sanctuary, and pride, sending an indispensable message that queer and transgender individuals are embraced as full and equal members of civic life; and

WHEREAS, Greater Austin is home to one of the largest and most vibrant LGBTQ+ populations per capita in the nation, with demographic studies from the Williams Institute estimating that over 5.9% of metro residents—more than 100,000 individuals—identify as LGBTQ+, contributing immeasurably to the city's cultural richness, workforce, and downtown vitality; and

WHEREAS, Transgender and gender-nonconforming Texans have faced an unprecedented wave of hostile legislation, administrative directives, and systemic marginalization from the State of Texas—ranging from restrictions on essential healthcare and public accommodations to invasive inquiries and rhetoric that directly threaten their physical safety, mental wellbeing, and basic human dignity; and

WHEREAS, In the face of this sustained statewide campaign of erasure and hostility against transgender and queer communities, visible municipal affirmations of protection and community solidarity are not merely symbolic, but critical public declarations of local values and public safety; and

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WHEREAS, Texas governors possess executive authority over state administrative agencies, including the power to appoint executive leadership and commissioners to the Texas Department of Transportation; and

WHEREAS, Following directives from the Governor of Texas and administrative enforcement actions by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) targeting unapproved roadway surface treatments and political expression, the City of Austin was forced under threat of regulatory and financial penalties to eradicate the beloved 4th Street rainbow crosswalks; and

WHEREAS, A new gubernatorial administration will be empowered to direct TxDOT leadership to review, revise, and potentially reverse overly restrictive administrative enforcement interpretations regarding roadway markings and decorative crosswalks, ending state interference in local municipal placemaking; and

WHEREAS, It is anticipated that this pending executive transition will relax and broaden the currently prohibitive regulatory pathway and eliminate administrative roadblocks, enabling the City of Austin to restore its historic roadway crosswalks alongside pedestrian right-of-way improvements;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE AUSTIN DOWNTOWN COMMISSION THAT:

The Downtown Commission strongly recommends that the Austin City Council direct the City Manager to immediately prepare comprehensive plans, cost estimates, and design schematics to reinstall the permanent rainbow crosswalks across the vehicular intersections on 4th Street, timed to coordinate with the transition in state administrative leadership and any accompanying revisions to TxDOT roadway enforcement policies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

The City Manager simultaneously advance the design and installation of durable, slip-resistant rainbow pedestrian walkways, sidewalk installations, and placemaking elements along the city-controlled 4th Street corridor between Lavaca Street and Congress Avenue, working in close collaboration with the Downtown Commission, the LGBTQ+ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, the Downtown Austin Alliance, and local LGBTQ+ community stakeholders to ensure these spaces stand as an enduring, unmistakable beacon of safety, celebration, and sanctuary.

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Motioned By: _____ Seconded By: _____

Date of Approval: November 18, 2026

Vote: ___-___
For:
Against:
Abstain:
Absent:
Vacant:

Attest: Edith Olivas, Commission Executive Liaison, Economic Development Department

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