

Placeholder: City of Austin skyline

CITY OF AUSTIN
2019 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
86TH LEGISLATURE

MAYOR & COUNCIL

Message from the Mayor:

The City of Austin looks forward to working with the 86th Legislature to best meet the needs and concerns of Austin residents. In this program you will find the City of Austin’s 2019 State Legislative Agenda approved by our City Council. The result of an inclusive process, we believe that this agenda best represents the needs and concerns of Austin residents. It is our intent that this agenda guide our city staff, in coordination with our strategic partners, in their efforts to advocate on behalf of the City of Austin and its residents.

We look forward to working together on policies that make Texas, and Texas cities, greater.

Mayor Steve Adler

Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo, District 9

Ora Houston, District 1

Delia Garza, District 2

Sabino “Pio” Renteria, District 3

Greg Casar, District 4

Ann Kitchen, District 5

Jimmy Flannigan, District 6

Leslie Pool, District 7

Ellen Troxclair, District 8

Alison Alter, District 10

City Manager

Spencer Cronk

PLACEHOLDER: COUNCIL PICTURE

PLACEHOLDER: GRAPHIC ABOUT AUSTIN

PLACEHOLDER: TEXAS CAPITOL

GENERAL LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

The City of Austin's 86th State Legislative Agenda reflects the City's priorities for efficient and cost-effective government services that foster Austin's prosperity, sustainability and safety. The City of Austin supports legislation that enhances City services, reduces the cost of providing services, prioritizes a prosperous business climate and improves the quality of life for its residents. The City of Austin opposes legislation that strips Austin residents of their right to self-governance, increases taxpayer costs for City services that residents rely on, undermines the principle of home rule, negatively affects the City's financial ability to act in the best interest of its residents, or imposes on Austin taxpayers the burden of paying for State mandates or collecting revenues for the State.

To that end, the City has adopted certain **legislative priorities** wherein City staff and its professional Intergovernmental Relations team is directed and authorized to protect interests critical to preserving the principle of home rule and Austin residents' right of self-governance.

In addition, the City has adopted statements of **support** wherein City staff and its professional Intergovernmental Relations team is directed and authorized to actively support legislation related to specific position(s) adopted by the City Council while not proactively seeking introduction of legislation.

Lastly, the City has adopted statements of **opposition** wherein City staff and its professional Intergovernmental Relations team is directed and authorized to actively oppose any legislation that contradicts or undermines the specific position(s) adopted by the City Council.

The City of Austin also supports the legislative initiatives of strategic community partners, such as regional government entities, Texas cities, the Texas Municipal League, educational institutions, non-profits, and private sector entities that enhance educational, cultural, and infrastructure resources in the Austin region to the extent these initiatives do not conflict with the City's agenda.

86th Legislature Priorities Affecting Cities

The City of Austin recognizes that the Texas Legislature has identified the following issues as legislative priorities for the 86th Legislative Session and directs the City staff and the Intergovernmental Relations team to:

- ❖ Oppose legislation that attempts to diminish the City's ability to govern the taxpayer's investment in municipally-owned utilities or negatively impacts the current status of Austin Energy, including the rate case approved by City Council on August 29, 2016.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that negatively affects the City's financial ability to act in the best interest of Austin's residents or reduces the City's AAA bond rating, including but not limited to:
 - Imposing a revenue cap of any type, including a rollback rate below eight percent, a mandatory tax rate ratification election, a lower rollback petition requirement, a limitation on overall city expenditures, or an exclusion of new property in the effective rate calculations; or
 - Lowering the homestead appraisal cap or expanding the appraisal cap to non-homestead properties.
- ❖ Protect Austin residents' right to govern themselves and work with their City government to adopt and enforce ordinances that address the health, safety, and public welfare of the community, including but not limited to, the ability to regulate earned sick leave, payday lending, and fair chance hiring.
- ❖ Preserve property value for Austin taxpayers by protecting the City's authority to promote good land use through:
 - land use and zoning regulations (including short-term rentals, billboard regulations, tree preservation and mitigation fees, parkland dedication, and landscape regulations),
 - building codes,
 - planning requirements,
 - impact fees or building permit fees,
 - annexation,
 - floodplain regulations, or
 - eminent domain.
- ❖ Protect Austin's civil rights ordinances and oppose legislation that attempts to diminish the City's ability to protect Austinite's employment, housing, public accommodation, and other civil rights that would threaten Austin's welcoming environment to businesses, conventions, and events and would tarnish Austin's status as an inclusive community for all.

PLACEHOLDER: GRAPHIC ABOUT PROPERTY TAXES AND REVENUE CAPS

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT & OPPOSITION

TAX REFORM & DEBT ISSUANCE

- ❖ Support legislation that provides local options for revenue expansion and diversification and creates a tax and revenue system that promotes equity, responsiveness, and the authority for local officials to act in the best interest of residents.
- ❖ Support legislation that would require mandatory disclosure of real estate sales prices or substantially improves the real estate appraisal process, including the appeals process.
- ❖ Support legislation that simplifies and accurately notifies taxpayers of the impacts of the City's adopted property tax rate.
- ❖ Support legislation that would allow for a percentage-based homestead exemption subject to a cap on the maximum value exempted or a local-option flat-tax exemption to ad valorem taxes.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that places Austin's taxpayers with the burden of paying for State mandates and collecting revenues for the State.
- ❖ Support legislation that protects or enhances municipal revenues and the flexibility to use such revenues.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that restricts the ability of the City to issue debt through either General Obligation or Certificates of Obligation bonds or cause confusing and onerous public notification requirements.
- ❖ Support legislation that would allow for a reduction, cap or exemption to water drainage fees for persons age 65 or older or disabled.
- ❖ Support legislation to modernize procurement methods and debt financing for the purchase of cloud computing technology assets.

WATER & WASTEWATER, ENVIRONMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

- ❖ Preserve and protect Austin's current and future water resources and water quality.
- ❖ Oppose any legislation that would restrict the City's ability to protect the floodplain.
- ❖ Support legislation that promotes healthy communities and economic prosperity through the protection and preservation of the region's air, land, and water and Austin's natural resources and open spaces.
- ❖ Support legislation that provides grants and financing assistance for high priority and security-related water and wastewater projects, drainage infrastructure, repair and replacement of aging infrastructure, and the improvement and maintenance of water and wastewater infrastructure.
- ❖ Support higher water conservation standards for plumbing fixtures, irrigation, and landscape practices and protect the City's authority to establish conservation standards.

HEALTH & PROSPERITY

- ❖ Support adequate funding for public health care programs, including Women’s Preventative Health and Family Planning Services, chronic disease prevention, behavioral health and substance abuse programs, to support the uninsured and underinsured residents of Austin and all local and regional health care programs.
- ❖ Support legislation and funding that creates equitable access to and availability of affordable, quality child care and education for all families of children aged birth to five; affordable, quality after-school programming; and evidence-based home visiting programs for families with young children.
- ❖ Protect the City’s ability to enforce basic health standards for the public through restaurant, food truck, and daycare inspections.
- ❖ Support legislation that improves access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food.

ANIMAL SERVICES

- ❖ Support legislation that positively affects the mission and service delivery of municipal animal shelters, animal health, and any other animal related regulations to save shelter pet’s lives, to work with rescue agencies and non-profits, and to model best practices for shelter pets and wildlife.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- ❖ Protect the City’s ability to manage and control public rights-of-way and publicly-owned land, to receive fair market compensation for use of public rights-of-way, and to require private companies to pay for the costs of relocating their facilities.

TRANSPARENT AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT

- ❖ Support legislation that clarifies and improves the state’s requirements for disclosure and filing requirements for business entities contracting with the City.
- ❖ Support legislation that reduces the costs of providing services by authorizing public notices on the Internet or through electronic service.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that erodes municipal sovereign immunity.
- ❖ Maintain the ability of Austin to acquire property for uses that benefit its residents and protect local taxpayers from paying additional compensation to individuals and businesses.
- ❖ Support legislation allowing the City of Austin to use, with state agencies and governmental entities, the value due the City of Austin on the ledger (property transaction log) of the Texas Facilities Commission, which value currently meets or exceeds \$1,319,2018 and in addition get credit or wide use of the balance of any other state related ledger that may exist.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that allows special districts to form inside the City limits or ETJ without City Council approval.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that limits or prohibits the City’s current ability to communicate or advocate with legislators or limits or prohibits the authority of the Texas Municipal League to use any funds to communicate with legislators.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that would increase state regulation of local ballot language or the initiative or referendum process.

EQUITY & AFFORDABILITY

- ❖ Support legislation that promotes equity for residents of Austin including pay-equity, education-equity, housing-equity, and health-equity.
- ❖ Support legislation and funding that will bolster the City's efforts to stabilize and sustain neighborhoods, preserve and expand the supply of housing that is affordable, expand economic opportunities, meet critical social needs, and fund other critical needs in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.
- ❖ Support legislation that prohibits predatory practices that pressure families to sell their homes.
- ❖ Support legislation and funding that aligns employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services to housing that is affordable and accessible to transit.

EDUCATION, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ Support legislation and funding that improves the City's ability to attract economic development, tourism, and provides economic opportunities for Austin's creative sector.
- ❖ Support the continuation of state incentives and tools to supplement local economic development strategies.
- ❖ Support legislation and funding that improves the quality of education for successful pathways to high school graduation, college, and careers.
- ❖ Support legislation and funding that provides Austin students and residents with career pathway opportunities that help improve the quality of the City's workforce.

HOMELESSNESS

- ❖ Support funding and programs that provide social services for individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health disorders, and/or substance use disorders.

ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

- ❖ Support legislation and funding that increases accessibility to public facilities and transit for individuals with disabilities.

PARKS

- ❖ Support funding for the Texas State Park System, the Texas Recreation & Parks Account Local Park Grant Program, and any program or funding that directly benefits parks, recreation, open space, trails, and tourism.

LIBRARIES

- ❖ Support increases in state aid for public libraries.
- ❖ Oppose legislation and the reduction of funding that limits the City's ability to provide knowledge and education to the Austin community through technology and books.

PUBLIC PENSION SYSTEMS

- ❖ Maintain joint state and local authority over City of Austin employee retirement plans.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that would negatively affect the City's public pension systems, including those for police and fire.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- ❖ Support continued funding and support of Police, Fire, and EMS operations, and oppose legislation that restricts their ability to effectively serve and protect the Austin community.
- ❖ Support legislation that continues to allow the use of technology as a public safety tool that makes driving a safer experience for all users.
- ❖ Support legislation that allows a sobering center to assume responsibility for intoxicated persons in lieu of placing them in a penal facility.
- ❖ Support legislation increasing funding for child safety programs, school safety, and crossing guards.
- ❖ Support legislation that improves the City's ability to administer effective municipal court programs including efficient and equitable collections.
- ❖ Support funding of homeland security programs that provide direct assistance to the City.
- ❖ Support legislation that reduces gun violence in coordination with local law enforcement including legislation that would limit or prevent access to firearms by domestic abusers or regulate and prevent access to bump stocks. Oppose legislation that would deregulate gun silencers/suppressors.
- ❖ Support legislation and funding to local governments that would expand and improve existing efforts to address the opioid epidemic, stop the illicit trafficking of fentanyl, carfentanil, oxycodone, and other opioids, and provide for greater cooperation at the regional, state, and federal levels with regard to policy discussions on the issue of opioid abuse.
- ❖ Support legislation that improves the City's ability to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of municipal employees.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that restricts the City's flexibility to effectively mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.
- ❖ Support legislation that reduces risk to lives and property from flooding.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that negatively affects the City's ability to maintain public confidence, trust, and support in the fairness and integrity of the Austin Police Department.

TRANSPORTATION & AVIATION

- ❖ Support legislation that allows Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) or other regional partner to develop commuter rail service to connect Downtown Austin, East Austin, Manor, Elgin, Travis and Bastrop Counties, which proposed commuter rail as identified by Capital Metro as the 'Green Line Commuter Rail' of its 'Project Connect System Plan'.

- ❖ Support legislation and funding for transportation and technology projects and initiatives dedicated to improving regional mobility and to maintaining, expanding, and improving transportation infrastructure and local transportation options.
- ❖ Support legislation that improves contracting options for delivery of transportation projects.
- ❖ Support increased state funding for transportation projects or legislation that creates local-option funding options for transportation projects.
- ❖ Support legislation that would allow a city to lower the prima facie speed limit from 30mph to 25mph or reduces the costs of lowering the prima facie speed limit.
- ❖ Support legislation that in accordance with federal law provides local governments and airport authorities with sufficient resources to provide for a safe and efficient aviation system and allows airports to be as self-sustaining as possible.