

Mayor Adler and Council Members,

We are writing to urge you to adopt an Austin Energy Resource, Generation and Climate Protection Plan that puts the utility firmly on the path to be 100 percent carbon-free no later than 2030. The plan should also ensure that the utility exhibits leadership in utilizing new carbon-free technologies, and provides ample opportunities for all customers to reduce their bills by utilizing energy efficiency and on-site solar energy wherever possible.

Without any federal commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change, the need for bold local action is greater than ever. Twenty -nine U.S. cities have already committed to 100 percent renewable energy. Many of these commitments are to reach the goal by 2030, or before. Five cities, including Georgetown, Texas, have already achieved this goal. This is the new standard for city leadership on climate change and we hope you will add Austin to this auspicious list.

The urgency of the climate crisis is such that we cannot wait to significantly reduce our impact as a city. Feedback loops are already accelerating climate change and the sciences shows that reducing emissions in the next few years is critical to avoid reaching a tipping point, where devastating climate change is unavoidable. Austin's goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 is laudable, but any opportunities to reduce emissions before that date must be taken. Eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from other sectors – like transportation – will be much more difficult than greening our electric supply. Committing to a 100 percent carbon-free plan for Austin Energy is the easiest and most affordable option for significantly reducing Austin's impact on the climate now.

Shifting to renewable and carbon-free energy sources has other benefits too. Wind and solar energy prices are now competitive with energy from fossil fuels, with the added benefit of allowing the utility to lock in low energy prices for up to 25 years. These energy sources use little or no water and therefore won't be vulnerable – as many coal and natural gas generators are – to drought conditions, which climate scientists predict will become more frequent in Texas.

The plan should also continue expand goals that allow customers to reduce their reliance on energy from the electric grid and therefor reduce their bills. Energy efficiency is widely accepted as the most affordable energy resource. Austin still has many homes and commercial buildings that are not properly insulated and weatherized. These investments are cost effective, reduce environmental impact, and improve quality of life for building inhabitants. The cost of utilizing solar energy at homes and businesses has plummeted in the past several years, making the technology accessible to middle income residents. Lower income residents and renters have mostly been unable to benefit from distributed solar in Austin so far, but other utilities are developing programs make solar accessible to these underserved customers. Austin Energy should do the same. Both energy efficiency and local solar goals should be expanded to ensure that these clean energy programs are available to provide benefits to all customers.

Austin Energy has been a leader on utilizing renewable energy and developing successful programs and policies. We hope you will adopt a more ambitious plan for Austin Energy than the one recommended by the working group and allow the utility to regain its leadership status.

Thank you for your consideration.

Austin People's Climate Mobilization

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