



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Rodney Gonzales, Director, Development Services Department *RG*
Rosie Truelove, Director, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department *RT*

Date: October 18, 2018

Subject: Resolution 20170126-038 and Ordinance 20160914-002 Regarding the Collection of Information about Demolitions

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a response to Austin City Council Resolution 20170126-038 regarding the collection of information about applications for permits for total demolitions of existing housing, including single-family and multi-family, and Ordinance 20160914-002, regarding the use of funding from the Development Surcharge Fee to fund technology enhancements. A portion of the funding has been used to make changes to the AMANDA application to meet requirements in the resolution. Council additionally requested, to the extent possible, the collection of demographic information such as age, race, single or family with children occupancy and income of most recent tenants.

Staff in Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) and the Development Services Department (DSD) worked together to identify potential avenues for responding to the resolution. In May of 2017, DSD launched a revised demolition application form with an optional demographics page, which can be found here:

http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/Applications_Forms/DemolitionPermit_app.pdf.

DSD also created online reports regarding the number of permits for the total demolition of existing housing units. The reports can be found on the City's Open Data Portal using the following links:

- <https://data.austintexas.gov/stories/s/i2tv-k59a>,
- <https://data.austintexas.gov/Building-and-Development/Demolition-Permits-Issued-for-Structures-with-5-Fa/qkuc-w9um>, and
- <https://data.austintexas.gov/Building-and-Development/Demolition-Permits-Issued-since-FY2010/pws3-a5fj>.

Data Collection Impediments:

Between May 2017 and September 25, 2018, the Development Services and Planning and Zoning departments collected 854 total demolition permit applications. Less than 1% of the applicants provided the optional demographic information, a summary of which is attached. Additionally, the City of Austin is not able to verify the accuracy of the demographic data being submitted through the demolition application process. Currently, the information from the optional form is provided by the applicant and is manually recorded in a spreadsheet.

Applicants for demolition permits are generally demolition contractors, who often do not have knowledge about the prior tenants, which may account for the low participation rate. The goal of the demolition contractor is to quickly obtain the demolition permit, so there is a strong incentive for the contractor to opt out of completing the information.

Since individuals who submit the demolition applications usually have no knowledge of previous tenants, and due to the lack of completion of the demographic forms, staff plans to remove the optional demographics page from the demolition application. However, DSD will add fields for bedroom count to the required section of the demolition application and will begin tracking that information.

Because of the challenges noted above, staff researched potential solutions to obtain as much of the requested data through a third-party source that collects data of this type. Multiple City departments have subscriptions to CoStar, a real estate data information service. CoStar has demolition data by zip code, which includes the number of units and year demolished for multifamily properties of five or more units. It does not, however, have demographic information, or any information about properties with less than four units.

If you have questions, please contact Rodney Gonzales at (512) 974-2313 or Rosie Truelove at 512-974-3064.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
 Joe Pantalione, Interim Assistant City Manager

Attachment: Data from the Completed Optional Demographic Forms Submitted between May 2017 and September 25, 2018