MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Rosie Truelove, Director, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development
           Department

DATE: February 18, 2020

SUBJECT: Staff Update on Resolution No. 20180628-080

This memorandum serves to extend the response date to present staff's full response to City Council Resolution No. 20180628-080 to September 30, 2020. The resolution directs the City Manager to explore a programmatic avenue by which income-restricted units are more easily promoted and thus more easily accessed by the low- and moderate-income populations in need of affordable housing opportunities.

The resolution calls for a Program that (1) connects low-income households with available income-restricted units; (2) provides a referral platform for nonprofits such as the Housing Authority of the City of Austin and AISD to refer residents; (3) connects graduates of the City of Austin Housing Smarts Program; and (4) publishes data to the Open Data Portal helpful to the general public. The resolution further calls for staff to provide recommendations that can incentivize landlords to provide notice of available units and lease to tenants participating in the Program. Finally, the resolution calls for future enhancement of a Program to incorporate market rate units that can assist households experiencing emergency situations and housing barriers.

Status Update:
The Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department (NHCD) staff has several initiatives underway responsive to this resolution. NHCD has enhanced its information on the Open Data Portal by providing data related to direct investments made by the Austin Housing Finance Corporation, as well as data related to units realized through the City of Austin's affordable housing incentive-based programs.

Open Data Portal [link: https://data.austintexas.gov/Housing-and-Real-Estate/City-of-Austin-Affordable-Housing-Inventory-AHI-/x5p7-qyuv]
The Open Data Portal provides easy access to *open data* about city government in an effort to spark innovation, promote public collaboration, increase government transparency, and give city leaders information necessary for evidence-based decision making. The Affordable Housing Inventory includes locations and contact information for affordable housing, the types and income restrictions required for certain units, and the different City programs under which the projects were funded or incentivized.

The Data Portal also offers a map view of the inventory, which enables users to view the locations of the units in the city.

Online Affordable Housing Search Tool [link: http://atxaffordablehousing.net/]
The Affordable Housing Search Tool is an online searchable database designed to enable users to search for affordable housing that best meets household needs. The database includes income-restricted units funded or incentivized by governmental agencies including the City of Austin, Housing Authority City of Austin, Housing Authority of Travis County, and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, as well as some market-rate properties that accept a large number of Housing Choice Vouchers. The tool was developed by a partnership of governmental and community organizations, including the City of Austin Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department and Communications and Technology Management (CTM), Austin CityUP, Housing Authority of the City of Austin, and IBM with assistance from Code of America.

Work Underway:
NHCD staff continues to prioritize the exploration of technological platforms in partnership with the CTM to bring solutions forward that enable the public to access a waiting list and/or interest pool for affordable housing. Additional time is required to explore and deliver recommended solutions.

The additional time also allows for the department to explore commercial off-the-shelf or commercially available off-the-shelf products that may serve to deliver the directed business solution. This approach coupled with the commissioning of custom-made solutions are underway by CTM and NHCD staff. NHCD recognizes the importance of providing technology solutions to allow the public efficient mechanism to locate affordable housing that meets the needs of a diverse population. This remains a key priority for the department.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
         J. Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager
         Stephen Elkins, Chief Information Officer, CTM