

RESOLUTION NO. 20210325-112

WHEREAS, the Housing Act of 1949 established the objective to provide "a decent home and a suitable living environment" for all; and

WHEREAS, poor housing conditions add to the burdens already experienced by low-income and marginalized communities, including physical and mental health stressors; and

WHEREAS, residents living in multi-family units often report experiencing health and safety issues as a result of ongoing repairs unaddressed by landlords; and

WHEREAS, more sustainable action is required to address health and safety emergencies experienced by our city's renters, including unsafe and uninhabitable living conditions, risks of homelessness, and displacement; and

WHEREAS, a diligent effort is required by landlords to remedy or repair certain conditions in a timely manner, especially during a state of emergency, and landlords should be held accountable to their tenants; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, City Council adopted City Code Chapter 4-14 (Registration of Rental Property) with the goal to ensure that Austin renters are living in properties that meet minimum health and safety standards, as defined by the International Property Maintenance Code; and

WHEREAS, it is a fundamental human right to access livable housing conditions and therefore it is even more important to protect tenant's rights; and

WHEREAS, Winter Storm Uri further compounded unsafe living conditions experienced by Austin tenants, further straining available housing inventories and City resources; **NOW THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The Council directs the City Manager to provide a report detailing action taken to protect renters' health and safety as a result of Winter Storm Uri, including but not limited to a summary of:

- a. all investigations and documentation of health and safety violations related to Winter Storm Uri, including the number of 3-1-1 calls and requests made, and the distribution of these calls and requests throughout the city;
- b. the habitability of the inspected units; and
- c. details regarding the landlords' stated timelines and other statements regarding repair needs and repair plans provided to the Austin Code Department by the landlord.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to continue to cite landlords who have failed to make repairs to damage caused by Winter Storm Uri.

The City Manager is directed to seek the rapid repair of health and safety violations that are persisting over a month since the end of the winter storm, where residents report that they are enduring unsafe, unacceptable, and/or noncompliant conditions in their homes. To achieve this, the City Manager should identify those cases where residents have reported they are facing such living conditions due to the winter storm and do the following:

- accelerate timeframes for initial compliance to the shortest amount of time reasonably possible when a violation is found (The Texas Property Code provides a rebuttable presumption that seven days is a reasonable time for repairs.),

- immediately escalate violations where compliance is not achieved during the initial compliance phase to the Building and Standards Commission, administrative hearing or municipal court, unless Code approves a written plan from the property owner laying out how and when the violation will be addressed to the satisfaction of the City. All plans shall be provided to tenants affected by the violations as quickly as possible upon request and submitted to the Building and Standards Commission at the next meeting, and
- provide monthly reports to the Building and Standards Commission specifically for storm-related multifamily code violations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to provide an update on the existing emergency relocation services enacted in response to a disaster declaration. This shall include details about the processes to immediately relocate individuals, the criteria for emergency relocation, and funding used for relocation services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to provide budget recommendations in the report to accomplish the following:

- a. Expand the online dashboard and 3-1-1 call hotline program to capture the input of impacted individuals such as location, request, and response time;
- b. Increase Code personnel, with special emphasis on multilingual personnel to provide direct services to cases involving health and safety issues experienced by tenants until they are resolved;

- c. Increase legal resources and funding for community-based legal services and tenants' rights clinics, along with robust multilingual educational material and additional community outreach;
- d. Any additional services supporting tenant rights, especially for people that are elderly, disabled, immigrants, low-income and persons of color;
- e. Increase funding to local community organizations to further provide ongoing education and support around tenant rights and aid application assistance; and
- f. Direct funds from the American Rescue Plan of 2021 and any other available federal, state and local resources toward rent relief, tenant support services, emergency home repairs, displacement mitigation, and utility bill relief, including energy, water, and gas, for vulnerable populations impacted by the storm.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

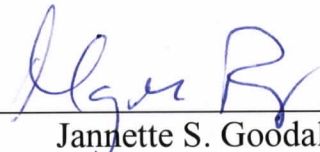
The City Manager is directed to provide a preliminary report back to Council by April 15, 2021 with the analysis and report requested by this resolution in regard to Winter Storm Uri.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City manager is directed to provide a full report back to Council by June 1, 2021 with a full analysis and report as requested by this resolution.

ADOPTED: March 25, 2021

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk