



TENANT RELOCATION ASSISTANCE

Codes and Ordinances Committee of the
Planning Commission
February 16, 2016

Background

- 2012 City Council resolution: develop recommendations on relocation standards and their implementation
- May 20, 2013: Neighborhood Housing & Community Development submit memo of recommendations to City Council
 - Incorporated feedback from stakeholders and recommendations from University of Texas Law School's Community Development Clinic

Resolution 20151112-027 (Nov. 12, 2015)

- Initiates amendments to the Land Development Code to establish relocation assistance requirements for applicants of developments with the intent to demolish and/or renovate multi-family structures that will result in the displacement of tenants
- Consider temporary and emergency relocation standards as well
- Stakeholder feedback process to identify the needs of the community and to ensure the ordinance that is ultimately drafted is responsive to them
- The goal is to mitigate the negative impacts of displacement on the most vulnerable residents

Purpose

- Currently, no comprehensive formal policy for assisting displaced tenants
- Redevelopment of several multifamily properties has resulted in tenant displacement over the last several years
- Displacement can have destabilizing effects on the most vulnerable in our city, including elderly, low-income, or disabled households

Participating Stakeholder Groups

- Tenants who have experienced displacement in Austin
- Representatives from:
 - Austin Tenants' Council
 - Ladies of Charity of Austin
 - Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid
 - HousingWorks Austin
 - Austin Apartment Association
 - Austin Board of Relators
 - Real Estate Council of Austin
 - Austin Independent School District
 - Housing Authority of the City of Austin
 - City of Austin - Code, Health & Human Services, Development Services, Austin Energy

Challenges of Relocation

- **Moving expenses** are costly and difficult to pay (application fees, deposits, truck rental)
- It is difficult to find **comparable housing** (new units more expensive, farther away from transit), requiring a long time to find a suitable new home
- Moving often requires **changing schools**; this is difficult on children in the middle of the school year (costs also accrue: transportation to school, uniform costs)
- **Security deposits** are not returned in a timely manner
- **Insufficient notice** is given to tenants of the need to vacate
- Tenants often do not know **where to go**, how to navigate process of relocating
- Some tenants need **interpreting services** while navigating process
- Units slated for demolition fall into **disrepair** toward the end of the move-out period, but are still occupied
- Tenants and property managers often experience **antagonistic or ineffective interactions**

Feedback from Tenant Advocates and Representatives of the Development Community

- Topics discussed:
 - Need for the City to **collect information** about potential displacement
 - Possibility of incorporating requirements into **permit applications** and/or review process
 - Tenants need **moving stipends** and prompt **return of security deposits**
 - Tenants need **more information on their rights** and where to go for help
 - Assistance finding **new housing** for tenants should be provided by a third party
 - **Monitoring and enforcement** of requirements should not fall on tenants

Concepts for Tenant Relocation Assistance Policy

- Applies to applicants seeking **site plan approval** or **permits** for demolition or other work that would displace tenants of multifamily structures
- **Tenant Relocation Plan** – to be prepared by developer/property owner; sets out requirements, fees; enforceable document
 - Periodic reports submitted by developer/property owner to City on compliance with tenant relocation plan and requirements
- Establish formal method of **notifying Austin Energy** when displacements from a multifamily property will occur
- **Private right of action** for tenants to sue when requirements are not being met
- Notice to vacate for tenants – **180 days**

Concepts for Tenant Relocation Assistance Policy cont'd

- **Tenant Information Packet** – distributed to tenants, includes:
 - Project information and timeline
 - Description of relocation assistance available and information on where to go for help/more information
 - Information on how to remain in same school
 - When to expect security deposit; what to do if it is not received
 - Forms to claim relocation assistance benefits
 - Information on tenants' rights
- **Relocation and Moving Assistance** to income-eligible tenants

Concepts for Tenant Relocation Assistance Policy cont'd

- City contracts with **third party** organization to provide relocation assistance
 - Organization verifies income eligibility, handles relocation and moving payments, and finds comparable housing for eligible tenants
- **Flexible move-out dates** for tenants during 180-day notification period
- During 180-day period, mandatory **written notice** to prospective tenants at time of application
- **Prohibitions on intimidation** of tenants, neglecting to repair units to minimize numbers of households that would be entitled to relocation assistance

Schedule – Previous Meetings

- **January 13th**: Stakeholder meeting with tenants and tenant advocates
- **January 21st**: Stakeholder meeting with tenants, advocates, and representatives of the development community
- **February 9th**: Housing Committee of the Community Development Commission – Briefing on tenant relocation assistance process and stakeholder feedback
- **February 10th**: Follow-up stakeholder meeting with all stakeholders to review and discuss draft provisions
- **February 10th**: City Council Housing & Community Development Committee – Briefing on tenant relocation assistance policy development
- **Tonight: February 16th**: Codes and Ordinances Committee of the Planning Commission – Briefing on tenant relocation assistance policy development

Tentative Schedule – Upcoming Meetings

- **February 20th**: Follow-up stakeholder meeting with tenants to review and discuss draft provisions
- **March 8th**: Community Development Commission – Presentation of draft recommendations
- **March 15th**: Codes and Ordinances Committee of the Planning Commission – Presentation of draft recommendations
- **March 22nd**: Planning Commission – Presentation of draft recommendations
- **April 13th**: City Council Housing & Community Development Committee – Presentation of draft recommendations
- **May 19th**: City Council – Presentation of final draft recommendations

Questions/Discussion

<http://austintexas.gov/page/tenant-relocation-assistance>

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