



City of Austin

MEMORANDUM

Neighborhood Housing and Community Development

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767 -1088

(512) 974-3100 ♦ www.austintexas.gov/housing

DATE: August 25, 2017

TO: Mayor and Council

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

SUBJECT: Funding Estimate: City Council Resolution 20170803-058, Database for tracking, reporting of available affordable housing

City Council Resolution 20170803-058 directed the City Manager to update the City of Austin Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department (NHCD) website with additional resources to create a comprehensive database of diverse, affordable housing and to formulate a cost estimate for the creation and management of a data hub and, if necessary, to prepare an item for Council consideration during the Fiscal Year 2017-2018 budget process.

As the Resolution states, there is no single comprehensive list of affordable housing, whereby Austin renters can quickly and cost-effectively find suitable affordable housing. Consequently, people with vouchers often must return them, and could potentially face homelessness. NHCD's current data is used primarily as a policy tool, and various community planning efforts have suggested requirements for a comprehensive database for renters.

NHCD, the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) and Austin CityUP, a smart city technology consortium, have collaborated and conducted extensive research on an affordable housing solutions app. This includes: an evaluation of affordable housing listings and business models, benchmarking with several cities, and current collection, management and distribution of affordable housing data. At a recent Austin CityUP data workshop NHCD learned that, in 2016, several Austin entities each had committed significant staff time to affordable housing databases, and that various commercial firms are exploring affordable housing product offerings.

Therefore, NHCD staff recommends a budget item of \$120,000 for Council consideration during the FY 2017-2018 budget process. Furthermore, we recommend that the City continue to leverage and work with the Austin CityUP initiative to ensure: maximum public benefit, including clients served and client outcomes; and that the solution is financially sustainable, through City funding, public-private partnership or third-party commercialization.

NHCD staff recommend special steps to transform what is now primarily a policy tool to a resource relied upon by Austin residents for quickly and cost-effectively locating affordable housing. The cost estimate of \$120,000 is for contracting with a third party to:

- Produce a citywide affordable housing data standard with data definitions, update frequency, and data quality;
- Establish shared data hub requirements for stakeholders, such as the public, voucher holders, housing counselors, landlords, and policymakers;
- Create an affordable housing search tool meeting minimum viable product requirements;
- Enable other nonprofits and firms to effectively use the data to create ongoing commercial solutions with machine readable and export capabilities, such as APIs.

The Resources for Renters Resolution with staff recommendations and funding will help Austin families and provide broad economic benefits including:

- Supplying Austin residents with access to timely and appropriate affordable housing solutions;
- Decreasing duplication of effort among housing counselors in multiple nonprofits;
- Increasing the efficiency and decreasing the cost to landlords of the renter referral process;
- Improving the likelihood that renters will find housing in areas of high opportunity.

For additional information, please contact Erica Leak, Policy and Planning Manager, at 512.974.9375.

Cc: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
Joe Pantaloni, Interim Assistant City Manager