



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr, Austin Fire Department
Assistant Chief Tom Dodds, Austin Fire Department
Rob Spillar, Director, Austin Transportation Department

DATE: June 15 2018

SUBJECT: Update on 2015 International Fire Code adoption and local amendments – Ordinance No. 20171207-098: Street Design, Safety, and Public Process

This memorandum is an update on the public process to gather information on local amendments to the 2015 International Fire Code (IFC), Sections 503.2.1 and 503.2.2, as directed in [Ordinance 20171207-098](#). Additionally, this memo provides updates on progress related to street design and fire access in specific developments—as well as next steps to identifying strategies around fire response and transportation safety—consistent with the missions of the Austin Fire Department (AFD), the Austin Transportation Department (ATD), and Council-adopted policies related to public safety and street design.

Background

On December 7, 2017, Council conducted a public hearing and voted to approve Ordinance No. 20171207-098 adopting the 2015 IFC and local amendments. Included in the adopted local amendments were changes to Sections 503.2.1 (*Dimensions and Exceptions*) and 503.2.2 (*Authority*) to keep these sections consistent with the currently existing code.

Prior to December 7, 2017, a memorandum was distributed to Council on November 27, 2017, explaining the request from stakeholder groups to postpone changes to Sections 503.2.1 and 503.2.2 of the 2015 IFC, allowing for further public input specifically on street clear-width requirements. These stakeholders included the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC), the Mueller Municipal Airport Plan Implementation Advisory Commission (Mueller Commission), and the Colony Park Neighborhood Association (CPNA); AFD staff concurred that more discussion should occur. Council directed the City Manager to continue to consider changes to these sections and to bring an ordinance before them by February 2, 2018 should any changes be necessary. Staff later requested an extension of the deadline to June 30, 2018.

Recommendation – Fire Code

After months of collaboration and discussion, we are not recommending any further amendments to the IFC nor to the Fire Chief's authority as outlined in the Code. Staff will continue to use the previously

adopted language in Sections 503.2.1 (*Dimensions and Exceptions*) and 503.2.2 (*Authority*) to identify solutions for street design, and will make decisions together on matters related to street widths and emergency response access. This will be accomplished through ongoing, collaborative discussions between AFD and ATD as well as various processes including development review, capital improvement project development, bond program initiatives, complete community partnerships, or other efforts that involve the design or redesign of streets.

Status - Ongoing Work

There is work currently underway to identify short-, medium-, and long-term strategies to ensure alignment among various regulations, policies, and operations for ATD and AFD, including potential future amendments to the IFC.

Visioning and Collaborative Strategy Development

ATD and AFD staff have jointly identified a vision to frame the development of a spectrum of strategies that focus on the overall safety of the community and meet each department's mission: *"Find the optimal balance of protection for multi-modal transportation and fire emergencies that results in the fewest total deaths from all causes."* Staff anticipates a final report completed by October 2018.

Several transportation policy initiatives are underway to memorialize the strategies developed in this collaborative process. This includes the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan and the City's transportation plan update process that will define new policies and inform finalizing content for the City Strategic Direction 2023 Mobility Outcome. Also underway is the update to the Transportation Criteria Manual, where new, agreed-upon street design standards will be established.

Once the community has the opportunity to weigh in on the larger vision and associated policies, staff can work to advance the various strategies, including revising the local amendment language to the IFC if needed. A public process related to this topic will occur this summer.

Colony Park and Mueller Development Projects; Local Area Traffic Management Projects

During the last six months, the Economic Development Department (EDD), AFD, and ATD have been working to address issues related to emergency access and complete street design related to public-private developments (the Mueller and Colony Park Sustainable Community developments). At the same time, ATD staff have been working on resolutions for Local Area Traffic Management (traffic calming) projects.

For the Mueller and Colony Park Sustainable Community developments, the interpretation of local amendment Sections 503.2.1 and 503.2.2 has affected planned streets in various stages of development. To address this, EDD, ATD, AFD, and their development partners developed an interdepartmental group to address street design concerns for all planned streets on a holistic level, looking not only at street width, but also block size, street network, hydrant locations, and other considerations related to emergency access and deployment. Solutions generated from these discussions have necessitated all parties make design concessions, ensuring an appropriate balance of safety between emergency access and deployment, and everyday users of City streets. The project management of the Mueller development has been invaluable with regard to the review of unbuilt roads for Colony Park. These discussions have impacted project budgets, schedules, and past agreements on street design, but the resulting changes have improved emergency access while maintaining the integrity of safe roadway access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles within a

walkable community development pattern. The interdepartmental group has identified solutions addressing both fire access and street design.

Further discussions on street design within these developments will continue to be informed by a commitment to multi-modal streets, and adherence to the respective Council-adopted Master Plan and Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning. In the case of Colony Park, staff will pursue an administrative amendment to the Colony Park Sustainable Community PUD zoning to account for adjustments to street design. EDD staff will work with the CPNA and other stakeholders to appropriately align the timing of any changes to the PUD with the current solicitation of a master developer for Colony Park. The techniques employed in enhancing emergency access within these master-planned communities will inform the policy development initiatives and upcoming stakeholder engagement process.

Regarding funded traffic-calming projects, ATD has been working on a case-by-case basis with AFD to identify designs that meet the goals of the project and expectations of residents, while also allowing the appropriate navigation of emergency response vehicles.

Stakeholder Engagement

Staff will invite the community, including identified stakeholder groups and the general public, to weigh in on this topic in June or July of this year. A public meeting will be scheduled and will focus on the proposed vision related to balanced safety concerns for emergency response and transportation safety, along with the community's preferences on strategies, to help staff prioritize and focus recommendations and resources moving forward.

This engagement period will be the first of many opportunities to receive input on components of this initiative. For example, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan and the Transportation Criteria Manual update have respective public engagement methods to gather additional input on street design and emergency response.

Next Steps

The interdepartmental group will continue to work toward a final report on strategies aimed to optimize a shared vision for public safety, estimated for completion in October 2018. This collaboration among departments will continue concurrently with, and be informed by, the stakeholder engagement process planned this summer. The final report will also include EDD and AFD's work with the Mueller and Colony Park Sustainable Community developments, as well as ATD and AFD's work on Local Area Traffic Management projects.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Robert Goode, Assistant City Manager, Infrastructure
Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager, Public Safety
Elaine Hart, Chief Financial Officer
Greg Canally, Deputy Chief Financial Officer

Attachments: [November 27, 2017 – Memo to Council](#)