



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer
Darrell Alexander, Building Services Officer

DATE: December 7, 2021

SUBJECT: **Response and Extension Request**
Resolution 20210902-042 – Green Building Policy

This memorandum is intended to provide a response to [Resolution 20210902-042](#), and request an extension on a response to one of the items included in the resolution. This resolution directed the City Manager to continue working on several outstanding issues related to green building policy outlined in the [June 12, 2021](#) memo to Council. The text regarding these issues is included below, with the response.

- 1) **Other Building Standards:** Several City of Austin projects currently underway are utilizing other building rating systems. These include the WELL building standard being used at the Development Services Center and Austin Energy Headquarters. Based on the post-occupancy experience and accrued benefits, the City of Austin may wish to add such standards to green building policy mandatory requirements in the future. Further analysis of the feasibility of such policy changes should be taken into consideration.

Staff is not recommending the formal policy adoption of any additional building standards for new construction or major renovations at this time, other than those that the Council has already adopted.

- 2) **Existing Facilities:** Existing facilities periodically require retrofits to replace or upgrade equipment to ensure that building systems are performing well and are able to achieve energy and water efficiency. Improvements to space heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), water heating, insulation, plumbing fixtures, irrigation systems, energy control systems, and lighting are common retrofit measures. Further consideration of desired performance standards for existing facility performance is needed.

The Building Services Department (BSD) is committed to using energy-efficient equipment and design strategies during routine retrofits, whenever replacement or upgrades of plumbing, electrical, or HVAC work is done. The Department looks system-wide at opportunities for using green equipment and standards and is investigating new ways to pay for these upgrades, potentially using the energy efficiency savings to pay for the equipment itself.

BSD recently completed extensive retrofit work at the Rebekah Baines Johnson (RBJ) and Techni Center buildings – both chillers having failed during the February 2021 Winter Storm. Both these buildings had 20+-

year-old chillers that used now-banned, obsolete R-22 refrigerant. As of January 2020, R22 refrigerants are no longer being manufactured as they deplete the ozone layer.

The new modular chillers installed at RBJ and Techni Center are energy-efficient and equipped with 410A, which is an ozone-friendly refrigerant. Additionally, the new modular chillers have independent compressors that build in resiliency if one of the chillers goes down. Innovative modular design makes adding capacity as easy as installing more modules for future expansion.

In 2021, BSD contracted with a third-party energy consultant to complete an inventory of core facilities, learning where retrofits and ensuing energy savings would result in short and long-term resiliency. Due to the more than ten-million-dollar value of identified projects, BSD and Finance are currently reviewing novel ways of financing these infrastructure costs, including the State of Texas approved Tax Exempt Lease Purchase (TELP) model, and prioritizing and reviewing all identified projects for return on investment.

- 3) **Public Art:** The Art in Public Places requirement for eligible projects to allocate 2% of capital improvement budget to commission or purchase art for the site does not currently have a corollary for public-private partnership (P3) projects. Commissioning or acquiring works of art is currently problematic for P3 projects due to challenges with the artist selection process, funding availability, and project delivery model whereby the City purchases a building from a developer.

The Austin Art in Public Places Program seeks additional time for the Arts Commission's working group to make recommendations regarding the inclusion of Art in Public Places in City of Austin P3 properties.

The Economic Development Department will provide a response to this item under separate cover by April 15, 2022. If additional information or a briefing regarding the contents of this memo is desired, please reach out to Lucia Athens at lucia.athens@austintexas.gov or Darrell Alexander at darrell.alexander@austintexas.gov.

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