

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**COSA - CITY CLERK
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TO: Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk

FROM: Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia, District 4
Councilmember Teri Castillo, District 5

COPIES: Erik Walsh, City Manager; Andy Segovia, City Attorney; Joe Frank Picazo, Interim Assistant to the City Manager; Emily McGinn, Assistant to the City Council

SUBJECT: **Establishing a Process for City Assistance After Home Fire**

DATE: February 6, 2025

Issue for Proposed Consideration

After coordinating this Council Consideration Request (CCR) with the City Manager, I respectfully request for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda of the earliest available meeting of the Governance Committee:

Requesting consideration of **Establishing a Process for City Assistance After Home Fire**

Brief Background

Home fires are devastating events that leave families with loss of property, trauma, and at times injury. With aging homes inside loop 410 the chance for home fires increase. On January 15, 2025, KSAT published an article that there were three deadly fires in three days¹. While the San Antonio Fire Department works year-round to educate the public on preventative measures, the danger of space heaters, and maintaining smoke detectors, preventative measures will only go so far.

When a family experiences a destructive fire, there is no formal mechanism to offer assistance. If the residents aren't already aware or connected with their council office, they may not seek help for relative city assistance services. It can also be difficult to locate families after a fire to inform

¹ <https://www.ksat.com/news/local/2025/01/15/officials-push-for-safety-measures-after-three-deadly-fires-in-three-days/>



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them about available programs. The city offers utility assistance, rental assistance, relocation assistance, legal aide, and referrals to other nonprofits. Council offices may coordinate with area nonprofits or businesses to gather necessary toiletries, clothes, school supplies and toys for children in similar situations.

In 2023, the San Antonio Red Cross provided approximately \$600,000 to Bexar County fire/disaster victims². According to the Red Cross, San Antonio has more residential fires than any other city in Texas, which means recovery resources are often scarce. The city should work with Bexar County and the local Red Cross office to determine how both entities can increase the level of assistance the Red Cross provides to victims of house fires.

This CCR is an opportunity to strengthen existing assistance programs and tailor them specifically for house fire incidents. For example, the Housing Assistance Program (HAP) administrative policy should be updated so families who experience single-family house fires are eligible for services through HAP.

Request

When the Fire Department is called to respond to an occupied home fire, the property should be tagged within the call system so it may be referred to the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD) and the Department of Human Services (DHS). Once a property is tagged, NHSD and DHS should notify Animal Care Services (ACS) and the Development Services Department (DSD) who will offer additional resources and prevent unnecessary enforcement actions against the home. This response system should also include local non-profits who are automatically notified to mobilize whenever the Fire Department tags a property.

The respective council office will also be notified and attempt to reach out to the family with any contact information gathered by the Fire Department. NHSD and the council offices will assist residents in applying for the appropriate assistance programs, including temporary relocation offered by the city and county, and applicable nonprofits such as the American Red Cross.

This process will help to assist families at the onset of a tragedy and seek to proactively provide relief.

² [San Antonio Red Cross resources depleting after covering record number of fires](#)



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Submitted for Council consideration by: _____


Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia, District 4



Councilmember Teri Castillo, District 5

Supporting Councilmembers' Signatures (exactly 3)

District

1.




10

2.




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3.




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