



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Item Number: 3

Agenda Date: February 8, 2022

In Control: Community Health, Environment and Culture Committee

DEPARTMENT: Office of Historic Preservation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Shanon Shea Miller

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Briefing regarding the proposed deconstruction ordinance and related items including a materials reuse center.

SUMMARY:

Since 2018, OHP has worked with stakeholders, peer cities, and a Deconstruction Task Force to develop policy recommendations for a local deconstruction program. Proposed program components include an ordinance that would require deconstruction and salvage for older buildings approved for demolition, incentives and resources for deconstruction projects, development of a materials reuse center, and integration of materials reuse concepts into City efforts such as affordable housing production and facility design. Such a program is anticipated to divert more than 5 million pounds of construction and demolition waste annually from local landfills. The program is also expected to advance the goals and objectives of the City's adopted plans related to housing, environmental sustainability, economic development, and equity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Deconstruction refers to the systematic dismantling of a building, typically in the opposite order it was constructed. Deconstruction is a more sustainable approach to building removal than demolition, and the repurposing of high-quality and valuable historic materials contributes to the local economy. On average, deconstruction employs six times the amount of workers compared to demolition and can contribute to the growth of local salvage, abatement, warehousing, retailing, and creative reuse industries.

More than 30% of existing residential buildings in San Antonio are of historic age and were constructed using old-growth hardwoods that are no longer available. Maintaining and repairing older buildings is most successful when reclaimed and salvaged historic materials are available. The increased availability of high-quality, salvaged materials such as longleaf pine and old-growth lumber is proven to increase affordability and accessibility for property owners seeking to repair their properties.

A deconstruction strategy also aligns with the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan by diverting demolition waste from local landfills and encouraging a circular economy of materials which reduces the demand and consumption of raw materials. This directly aligns with the City's broader goals of achieving climate change readiness by facilitating materials reuse and supporting zero-landfill construction. Deconstruction also improves the likelihood of safe abatement of hazardous materials and prevents harmful dust from permeating within our dense residential neighborhoods.

Deconstruction has proven potential to create stable jobs with low training thresholds, close the consumption loop of building materials, and contribute to more sustainable demolition and construction practices. With a large amount of historic-aged building stock and a growing economy, San Antonio is poised to become the American municipal leader in this effort.

Key anticipated outcomes from the implementation of a deconstruction and salvage ordinance include:

- Reduced water consumption, construction & demolition landfill waste, carbon emissions, and dependency on raw goods;
- Fostering of a local circular economy, where existing materials are given new life;
- Generation of local jobs in deconstruction, warehousing, retailing, trades, and value-added manufacturing sectors;
- Creation of sustainable employment pathways for the economically and socially disadvantaged;
- Increase in the availability, accessibility, and affordability of high quality, historic building materials sourced from San Antonio's "urban forest;"
- Inclusion of new participants in salvage exchange market, including those traditionally excluded;
- Increase in the likelihood of safe abatement of hazardous building materials in older structures, among other public health and air quality benefits;
- Generation of a stockpile of quality reclaimed materials to be used in disaster response efforts and in affordable housing repair and production; and
- Promotion of reuse, upcycling, and other creative and sustainable waste habits.

The former Planning & Community Development Committee and Arts, Culture, and Heritage Committee were briefed on this initiative in 2019 and 2020. This item provides an update to the initiative and a briefing on draft policy components and proposed ordinance phasing.

ISSUE:

Approximately 500 buildings are demolished in San Antonio every year contributing to more than 15,000 tons of landfill waste. A deconstruction program for select building types in San Antonio would divert waste and provide new opportunities for reuse, job growth, and affordability.

Prior to the proposal of an ordinance, the Office of Historic Preservation has taken several steps to ensure that a local deconstruction program will be successful. This includes hosting trainings and certifications, creating new partnerships, securing grant funding and other resources, and finding creative ways to support a robust local marketplace for reclaimed materials. In February of 2020, OHP hosted a deconstruction “think tank” of peer cities and private industry professionals to provide additional input and share new ideas for achieving common waste diversion and materials reuse goals. The think tank also included multiple opportunities for public participation.

As proposed, the draft deconstruction ordinance includes the following policy components:

- Deconstructions will be administered by OHP through the existing demolition permitting process.
- A requirement to deconstruct the property will be based on construction date and building type; permits will only be issued to certified contractors.
- Contractors must complete a pre-deconstruction materials inventory and salvage plan on a digital form provided by OHP staff.
- The permit is subject to a random inspection and a final inspection upon submission of a close-out report. For data collection purposes, the close-out report will include information about the quantity of materials that were salvaged and where the salvaged materials went (retail shop, storage, or reuse on either another project or on site).
- Materials must be sorted and secured on site during deconstruction unless otherwise documented by the contractor.
- Applicability of the ordinance will be phased as follows:
 - PHASE 1 – Residential single family, multifamily 4 units or less, and rear accessory structures built in 1920 or earlier, citywide; plus residential single family, multifamily 4 units or less, and rear accessory structures with a historic zoning overlay or located within a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD)
 - PHASE 2 - Residential single family, multifamily 8 units or less, and rear accessory structures built in 1945 or earlier, citywide; plus residential single family, multifamily 8 units or less, and rear accessory structures with a historic zoning overlay or located within a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD)

Based on feedback received to date, the concept of a material reuse and innovation center also warrants further exploration. The facility could likely be operated by a non-profit partner or selected third party to facilitate the inventory and exchange of salvaged building materials.

A material reuse and innovation center could serve as a site for material receivership, inventory, and distribution, provide community education and workforce development space, and jumpstart a center for material innovation and technological advancement in the reuse of reclaimed materials. Models for similar centers exist in Houston, Vancouver, and Charlotte, and there is a growing trend of municipalities nationwide playing a major role in supporting material reuse and redistribution in order to reduce landfill waste, advance the circular economy, and aid in disaster resiliency. OHP has requested TCEQ grant funding administered by the Alamo Area Council of Governments to support these efforts, as well as funding for small grants for local deconstruction projects to offset any potential additional costs incurred by contractors or property owners.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only. The review and recommendation of draft policy components bears no fiscal impact.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only. It will be considered by the Planning and Community Development Committee at a future date prior to Council consideration.