



City of Austin

MEMO

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Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Office

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DATE: June 17, 2013

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Mike Trimble, Capital Planning Officer, Capital Planning Office
Betsy Spencer, Director, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development *EOS*

SUBJECT: Resolution No. 20130117-061: Voter information/Comparative practices related to bond elections

The Austin City Council approved Resolution No. 20130117-061, which is to present to the City Council on various topics related to affordable housing to include long term funding opportunities for affordable housing. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide supporting information responsive to the Resolution, specifically regarding voter information comparative practices related to bond elections. The information below is provided by the Capital Planning Office.

Background

In its resolution, Council requested information on comparative practices for voter information related to bond elections. Staff compared the City of Austin's 2012 Bond development process with the City of Dallas and City of Houston. Both Dallas and Houston also had bond referendums in November 2012, and both had an affordable housing component to their bond packages.

The City of Dallas put a bond package before the voters in 2012 that totaled \$642 million, with the following propositions:

- Proposition 1: Transportation - \$261 million
- Proposition 2: Drainage - \$326 million
- Proposition 3: Economic Development - \$55 million

Proposition 3 included funding for affordable housing units in support of the city's economic development goals and transit-oriented development, in addition to other infrastructure improvements. The ballot language for Proposition 3 was as follows:

The issuance of \$55,000,000 in General Obligation Bonds to promote economic development in the Southern Area of the City, and in other areas of the City in connection with transit-oriented development, by providing public infrastructure and funding the City's economic development programs for such areas.

The City of Houston also developed a bond package for 2012 that totaled \$410 million and resulted in five propositions for voters to consider:

- Proposition A: Public Safety - \$144 million
- Proposition B: Parks - \$166 million
- Proposition C: Public Health/Sanitation - \$57 million
- Proposition D: Libraries - \$28 million
- Proposition E: Housing - \$15 million

Proposition E was for demolition of blighted properties in preparation for construction of federally-funded affordable housing units and included the following ballot language:

The issuance of \$15,000,000 affordable housing bonds for the acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, and equipment of affordable housing and the levying of taxes sufficient for the payment thereof and interest thereon.

Voter Information Comparative Analysis

With respect to voter information provided, staff compared the City of Austin's 2012 Bond process to that of Dallas and Houston. The following table is a summary of the findings:

	Austin	Dallas	Houston
Community Meetings	✓	✓	
Council Briefings	✓	✓	✓
Public Hearing(s)	✓	✓	✓
Online Information	✓	✓	✓
Voter Information Brochure	✓		
Election Notice	✓	✓	✓

All three jurisdictions made extensive use of city websites to provide information on proposed bond packages and other bond development information. In addition, each city held council briefings on proposed bond packages and public hearings for additional citizen input.

Dallas and Austin were very similar in both the timeline and process for development of their 2012 Bond programs, with community meetings being a part of the engagement process. Dallas began its bond development process in January 2012 and held several council-sponsored town hall meetings that spanned all council districts.

Houston worked on a much shorter timeline, with the mayor presenting an initial proposed bond package in July 2012 and Council setting the ballot in August. Three public hearings were held by council after the ballot was set to obtain additional input on community priorities. In contrast to Austin and Dallas, Houston did not hold community-based meetings.

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The City of Austin was the only municipality of the three to produce a voter information brochure in addition to providing election notice information to voters.

Please don't hesitate to let me or Mike Trimble know if additional information is required.

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
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