

Tenant Relocation Assistance Stakeholder Meeting Notes

02/10/2016

Moving Expenses

- Amount of moving/relocation payments would most likely be calculated during nexus study.
- Should moving expenses and relocation payments be only for income-eligible displaced tenants? What threshold is appropriate?

Housing Search/Stipends

- Many two-bedroom and three-bedroom units are being replaced with single bedroom units. Affordability and accessibility are issues.
- Austin Code generates money from violations – potential funding source for assistance?
- Until a nexus study is completed, it may be necessary for the City to provide funds for tenant assistance. Nexus study will determine the cost of displacement
- An Affordability Impact Statement could be included with the recommendations to Council to discuss potential affordability impacts of recommended requirements
- Information provided/program created should leverage other existing programs as much as possible, including Best Single Source (BSS) and Rental Assistance programs administered by Health & Human Services Dept.

Tenant Relocation Plan

- Periodic reports submitted by developer/property owner to City on compliance with tenant relocation plan and requirements
- Tenant relocation packets would be enormously helpful. Created by third party agency?
 - Organization verifies income eligibility, handles relocation and moving payments, and helps identify comparable housing for eligible tenants.
 - Provides comprehensive information and resources for tenants.
 - Tenant Information Packet – distributed to tenants, includes:
 - Project information and timeline
 - Description of relocation assistance available and information on where tenants can go for help/more information
 - Information on how to keep students in same school
 - When to expect security deposit; what to do if it is not received
 - Forms to claim relocation assistance benefits
- Assistance should not be tied to liability waivers.

- Notice to vacate – what information should it contain? Contact information for relocation services listed on the notices posted throughout the property?

Process of Relocating

- Applications for new apartments are often in English – this should be addressed as it poses a huge problem to tenants for whom English is not their primary language.
- Bilingual applications are very necessary.
- Notice to vacate 180 days before demolition?
 - Concerns about how this requirement would interact with other regulations (such as mandatory six-month waiting period for utility hookups once unit is vacated)
- During 180-day period, mandatory written notice to prospective tenants at time of application.
- Flexible move-out dates for tenants during 180-day notification period.
 - Flexible move-out dates don't necessarily have to match the length of the notice to vacate period – could be a shorter time
- Prohibitions on intimidation of tenants, neglecting to repair units to minimize numbers of households that would be entitled to relocation assistance

Data and Enforcement Mechanisms

- No comprehensive resource for determining the rate and pace of displacement. Data should be tracked and documented.
- Enforcement mechanisms:
 - Periodic reporting would help City keep track of what is going on. Perhaps the property owner or developer would be required to submit the tenant relocation plan six months before they would be able to demolish anything. Still in the process of figuring out other triggers. Site plan review or approval process?
- Applies to applicants seeking site plan approval or permits for demolition or other work that would displace tenants of multifamily structures.
 - Are there other instances where displacement would occur that would be appropriate to consider for assistance requirements, such as mobile home park displacements?
- Establish formal method of notifying Austin Energy when displacements from a multifamily property will occur.