



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

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**Agenda Item Number:** 3.

**Agenda Date:** 9/9/2019

**In Control:** Planning and Community Development Committee

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**DEPARTMENT:** Office of Historic Preservation

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Shanon Miller, Director

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** All

### **SUBJECT:**

Briefing regarding the deconstruction and salvage initiative and associated draft policy components.

### **SUMMARY:**

In 2017, Councilman Roberto Treviño initiated a Council Consideration Request (CCR) in response to demolition penalties and neighborhood concerns in San Antonio. One of the recommendations from that effort was to explore deconstruction as an alternative to traditional demolition. Deconstruction refers to the systematic disassembly of a structure in the opposite order it was constructed in order to maximize the salvage of materials for reuse.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

For the past year, OHP staff has worked with stakeholders and the public to draft a potential deconstruction ordinance that would apply to older buildings approved for demolition. 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 40% of existing buildings in San Antonio are of historic age. 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 will improve affordability and accessibility for property owners which can help to prolong the life of our historic districts,

neighborhood conservation districts, and existing housing stock.

This strategy also aligns with the draft framework for the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. Over 400 buildings are demolished in San Antonio every year. A deconstruction program for select building types in San Antonio could divert more than 3,000 tons of demolition waste from local landfills. A deconstruction strategy also encourages 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 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; and
- Promotion of reuse, upcycling, and other creative and sustainable waste habits.

## ISSUE:

Over 400 buildings are demolished in San Antonio every year. A deconstruction program for select building types in San Antonio could divert more than 3,000 tons of demolition waste from local landfills.

Currently, the UDC does not include alternatives to traditional demolition for building removal. In historic districts, citizens have expressed concern over a lack of formal salvage and reuse policies for smaller accessory structures approved for demolition. Citywide, public feedback has included a need for a formal deconstruction and salvage policy for buildings of a certain age to limit the amount of high quality, historic building material sent to the landfill, which can instead be recaptured and reused in other structures. Residents in historic districts have cited the necessity of historic materials being accessible and affordable.

Staff has facilitated numerous opportunities for public input and will present the results of that process. Staff has also developed draft policy recommendations and related documents to be used in pilot deconstruction efforts across the city. Prior to the adoption of an ordinance, the Office of Historic Preservation is taking several steps to ensure that a local deconstruction program will be successful. This includes hosting trainings and certifications, creating new partnerships, identifying funding and other resources, and finding creating ways to support a robust local marketplace for reclaimed materials.

In the coming months, OHP will offer training for demolition and general contractors registered with the City, as well as a more comprehensive workforce development training to build a local workforce in deconstruction and salvage. A 1930s structure is being utilized for in-field trainings through a partnership with the National Park Service.

Supporting a robust local materials exchange marketplace is imperative to the success of any potential deconstruction program. Staff is approaching this challenge in several ways.

OHP is working with local startups to provide guidance and feedback toward the creation and development of an online materials marketplace that would connect those seeking reclaimed building materials with those with materials to sell or donate.

OHP has also applied for a \$175,000 grant to fund community-driven maker centers that would redefine the relationship between historic preservation and waste by creating a model for deconstruction that reframes salvaged building materials as an economic engine, educational resource, and heritage asset. On June 11, 2019, OHP was selected as a first-round finalist and invited to submit a second-round application for the grant.

Until the private sector develops the infrastructure required to support the influx and exchange of materials, there is concern that the local marketplace would become quickly oversaturated which could impair the success of the program. Based on the feedback received, the potential policy warrants further exploration of a city-owned and operated salvage and reuse warehouse to service the community and facilitate the storage and exchange of salvaged building materials.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.