



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Date: 1/11/2021

In Control: Planning and Land Development Committee

DEPARTMENT: Office of Historic Preservation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Shanon Shea Miller, Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: 5

SUBJECT:

Briefing on the District 5 Shotgun House Rehabilitation Pilot Project and an overview of the Office of Historic Preservation Shotgun House Initiative.

SUMMARY:

The District 5 Shotgun House Rehabilitation Pilot Project goal is to complete affordable rehabilitations on three shotgun type houses and assess current processes and resources. The project will be completed through a collaboration between the City of San Antonio, UTSA, and community partners. The partners will collaborate to establish workforce trainings framed within best practices under the Secretary of Interior Standards as well as sustainable and green building practices. After the completion of the three rehab projects, best practice “how-to guides” will be developed for owners, city staff, financial institutions, and micro-business support organizations dedicated to utilizing and maintaining the affordability of existing housing. The outcomes of the pilot project will help to define the infrastructure and framework needed for a system that can be replicated citywide.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In late 2018 the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) began the Shotgun House Initiative that sought to locate every shotgun house in San Antonio. The initiative is ongoing and serves to celebrate and promote this important housing type and to encourage the reuse of the existing and naturally affordable housing stock.

The shotgun house is a valuable cultural resource that is rapidly vanishing in the United States. These homes were historically affordable housing and continue to be affordable housing today. To date, over 300 shotgun houses have been found in San Antonio. The oldest dates to the 1870s. They can be found in almost all of San Antonio’s older neighborhoods and have been located in Districts 1, 2, 3, and 5.

These narrow buildings were easy to build on small parcels popular in the late 1800s. The small scale and design of the shotgun house type adds to the variety of housing in established neighborhoods with an opportunity for affordable rental rates or purchase prices. These houses have less square footage requiring less energy usage as they were designed for hot climates. Steeped in culture, tradition, and history, the preservation of this housing type serves to retain neighborhood identity and furthers cultural sustainability throughout the city.

OHP commissioned a study in 2019 called Opportunity at Risk, San Antonio's Affordable Housing Stock completed by Place Economics. The study explores the role older buildings could have in meeting the affordable housing needs of San Antonio. The recommendations found in the study include the development of a home repair strategy, contractor training, and repair certifications that considers cost, effectiveness, and equity.

The preservation and reuse of this housing stock minimizes environmental impacts through the retention of original materials and reutilization of the energy already consumed in the production of the structures known as embodied energy. Additionally, restoring and rehabilitating these houses offers the continuity of traditional building trades and presents the opportunity for training and workforce development through the OHP Living Heritage Trades Academy. Leveraging living heritage for economic prosperity, the construction activity associated with saving these homes will result in the success of local traditional artisans and create jobs for future artisans.

In September 2020, Councilwoman Shirley Gonzalez spearheaded partnerships between the City of San Antonio; the University of Texas at San Antonio; Neighborhood Housing Services of San Antonio, a non-profit housing development organization; and MicroSA, a non-profit providing support for urban core microbusinesses that includes training for independent building contractors and trades people. The Office of Historic Preservation is assisting with coordination and is serving as a resource to facilitate successful and affordable rehabilitation of these historic and cultural resources to serve as a best practice.

The goal is to complete the rehabilitation of three shotgun type houses in a pilot program to determine the best practices for an affordable rehabilitation throughout the city. This will include the documentation of rehab project costs, the identification of potential financing strategies, and recommended methods for assistance in title clearance and deed acquisition where needed. This pilot program will also explore the perceptions that the rehabilitation of historic or cultural resources like shotgun houses is too expensive, complicated, and cannot be affordable. Through the rehab of the three houses we will test this perception by collaborating with contractors on the scope of work, identifying any treatments that increase costs, and seeking affordable solutions.

The Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD) is participating in the pilot by utilizing its Owner Occupied Rehab (OOR) program to restore a small home and contracting with the three pilot partners. The OOR rehabilitation will be used to document the restoration process and create guidelines for future rehabs. In addition, NHSD is contracting with three partners in amounts of \$50,000 to provide additional support for the pilot as it moves to create financial models to rehab additional homes on the westside of San Antonio. These contracts include the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) School of Construction Science & Management to document the rehabilitation process, MicroSA to train contractors interested in future shotgun home rehabilitation projects, and Neighborhood & Housing Services of San Antonio to assist as the lead contractor on one of the three homes.

ISSUE:

Over 56% of the 42,000 housing units in District 5 are owner occupied. The homes are modestly valued at a

median of \$80,000 with 85% built before 1970. District 5 experiences a disproportionate number of residential demolitions, both private and City-ordered. There is a need to develop a strategy to overcome the issues that leave the existing housing stock vulnerable to extreme deterioration, abandonment, and underutilization. Unless a solution is found, the city's stock of affordable single unit housing will continue to be depleted in the urban core.

There is a corresponding need to support local small contractors who can provide permitted remodeling services at modest costs. The 2019 study Opportunity at Risk, San Antonio's Affordable Housing Stock concludes that, "It is critical that as much of the older existing housing stock be maintained as possible. There are currently very few effective tools for retention of older housing stock. Creating a strategy of maintaining existing older housing as a central component of a comprehensive affordable housing strategy, using a wide array of tools, would put San Antonio at the forefront of addressing the affordable housing crisis in America." The D5 Shotgun House Rehabilitation Pilot program takes a collaborative approach to addressing these issues.

ALTERNATIVES:

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FISCAL IMPACT:

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RECOMMENDATION:

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