

City of Houston Transportation, Technology, and Infrastructure Committee

September 17, 2020 Meeting

Budget Amendment Reference Handout

TTI Agenda Item:

Discussion on the Mayor's Street Rehabilitation Initiative and the Neighborhood Street Maintenance Program

Referenced Budget Amendment(s):

FY2021 Gallegos 14.05

Amendment Language as Presented:

Within 60 days of approval of this amendment, the Houston Public Works Department shall provide an update on its neighborhood street maintenance program to the Quality of Life Committee or the Transportation, Technology & Infrastructure Committee. The update shall focus on the department's preventative and corrective maintenance schedule, prioritization and funding allocation process, and ways to expand the department's maintenance program to include gutter, curb, and sidewalk repair utilizing operations and maintenance funds (DDSRF 2310, 2311, or 2312).

TTI Agenda Item:

Discussion on the Houston Permitting Center Expedited Plan Review Pilot Program and Process Improvements

Referenced Budget Amendment(s):

FY2021 Robinson 2.01/Alcorn 5.07 and FY2020 Edwards 4.02

Amendment Language as Presented:

FY2021 Robinson 2.01/Alcorn 5.07:

Permitting Center Process Improvement: Process improvement recommendations made by the Houston Permitting Center Advisory Board shall be presented to the Transportation, Technology, and Infrastructure Committee within 90 days.

FY2020 Edwards 4.02:

Expedited Commercial Permitting: Extensive delays in the commercial permitting process often result in business losses to commercial property owners, as well as prospective commercial tenants. The City of Houston should strive to create a commercial permitting process that keeps building standards high and safe, while also promoting efficiency that encourages the growth of the local economy through supporting large and small commercial activity. within the first 60 days of the fiscal year for a proposed ordinance or other appropriate recommendation. Under the existing permitting process from the Houston Permitting Center, a person or business seeking full plan review from the Houston Permitting Center for a commercial property can expect the process to take approximately 25 business days from the time of initial submission of its plans to the completion of the plan review for commercial permits.

The Status Quo for Commercial Properties: The current method of commercial permitting review is broken into three classifications: light, minor, and complex. Per the Houston Permitting Center, the following current time frameworks and goals exist:

1. For "Light Commercial" (including remodels, tenant improvements with a design time of 1-2 months) the Houston Permitting Center seeks to reduce the 15-business day review time to 10 business days (submittal) or 7 business days (resubmittal)
2. For "Minor Commercial" (including new restaurant build outs, shopping center build outs with a design time of 3-6 months) the Houston Permitting Center seeks to modify the 15-business day review time to 15 business days (submittal) or 10 business days (resubmittal)
3. For "Complex Commercial" (including any ground up construction with a design time 12-18 months), the Houston Permitting Center seeks to modify the 15 business days review time to 25 business days (submittal) or 15 business days (resubmittal) Of note is the fact that each new resubmittal under the existing process can add an additional 15 business days to the overall process—causing additional delays that result in business losses to property owners, as well as prospective tenants. In order to enhance the customer experience, facilitate commercial economic activity, and reduce

the potential for business losses experienced due to delayed permitting of commercial buildings, the City of Houston shall adopt a new “Expedited Commercial Permit” option for commercial property of various sizes that will minimize review time and charge prices that allow for the self-sustaining nature of the Expedited Commercial Permit option and improved speed of the overall general permitting process of the Houston Permitting Center. Specifically, the “Expedited Commercial Permit Fees” shall cover the cost of staff, administrative overhead, and all accommodations necessary to carry out the functions of the Expedited Commercial Permit option. Expedited Commercial Fees will also aid in helping the general commercial permitting goals become attainable. Instead of the current system, which separates construction activities into three categories with three separate review time goals, the Expedited Commercial Permit option will streamline the building plan review and overall permit process by holding a single-review session within 7 business days of initial submission with all necessary City plan reviewers representing all the required disciplines.

NEW PROCESS:

1. After receiving an application for expedited review, the Houston Permitting Center will schedule a single-session review with the applicant to take place within 7 business days of the submission of the application.
2. The applicant, the applicant’s design team and consultants will meet with all necessary City plan reviewers representing all the required permitting disciplines in one review session.
3. The applicant will pay the Expedited Commercial Permit Fee plus an hourly fee for the time spent with the plan reviewers representing all necessary permitting disciplines.
4. If any resubmittal meetings are required, the necessary parties will meet within 2 business days.
5. Upon completion of all resubmittals and revisions to the satisfactory of all the necessary plan reviewers representing all permitting disciplines, the applicant will pay the Expedited Commercial Permit Fee plus the hourly fee and be given all necessary permits the same day. The Mayor’s Houston Permitting Center Advisory Board shall work with the Director of the Houston Permitting Center to designate the appropriate amounts for an “Expedited Commercial Permit Fee” schedule based on the value of the construction project (as currently provided for under the existing commercial permitting schedule), square footage of the building, and complexity of the project. A la carte expenses, such as Administrative & General Inspection Fees, Structural Permit Fees, Parking Lot, Paved Areas & Sidewalk Fees, Occupancy Inspection Fees, Fire Protection/ Alarm Fees, HVAC Permit Fees, Electrical Permit Fees, Elevator Permit Fees, Habitability Inspection Fees, and Plumbing Permit Fees, will also be charged. The Expedited Commercial Permit Fee amounts should be charged to adequately support the full expenses of the expedited commercial review services described above, as well as to pay the amounts necessary to assist in achieving commercial property permitting goals of the Houston Permitting Center mentioned previously

TTI Agenda Item:

Discussion on Green Stormwater Infrastructure Incentives

Referenced Budget Amendment(s):

FY2021 Kamin 8.02

Amendment Language as Presented:

In August 2019, the City of Houston released the “Houston Incentives for Green Development” report outlining recommendations for using Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) to achieve greater flood resilience in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, including property tax abatements for private developments that incorporate GSI. Green infrastructure improves neighborhood resilience by reducing drainage concerns from small storms. Furthermore, green infrastructure mitigates urban heat, which is a major issue for the city as Houston expects to go from 10 days to 74 days a year with a heat index of 105 or more by the year 2050. The GSI incentives program aligns with the Resilient Houston strategy, Climate Action Plan, and Harvey recovery programs. This program presents an opportunity for the City to address two major risks, flooding and urban heat, by implementing a program with strong support from the private sector. Before the fourth quarter of 2020, City Council shall vote to amend the Tax Abatement Guidelines in Chapter 44 to incorporate property tax incentives for green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) in private land development within the corporate boundaries of the City. Once implemented, the city will annually monitor and report the increase in GSI implementation across the city and track the number of projects that have taken advantage of the incentive program.