



Legislation Text

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RESOLUTION NO. R17-51

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GLENDALE, MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA, AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OPEN DATA PROGRAM FOR THE CITY OF GLENDALE.

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Purpose and Recommended Action

This is a request for City Council to waive reading beyond the title and adopt a resolution creating an Open Data Program for the City of Glendale.

Background

Glendale was selected to participate in the Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities initiative to receive free technical assistance in focused content areas aimed at helping cities leverage data and evidence in decision-making. One of the content areas in which Glendale is receiving technical assistance is related to the establishment of an Open Data Program. "Open data" is data available in machine-readable formats that can be used, reused, or redistributed by anyone, for free, with no restrictions on access. Data is defined as statistical, factual, quantitative, or qualitative information.

To do this work, the City convened an open data team made up of representatives from the City Manager's Office, City Clerk's Office, City Attorney's Office, Finance, Police, Fire, Code Compliance, Building Safety, Water Services, Public Affairs, and Technology & Innovation to work with the Sunlight Foundation (Sunlight), a What Works Cities partner. The role of this team is to assess the city's current practices around data publication, to explore opportunities to help improve service delivery, and to support the proactive release of public information on an ongoing basis.

The city's work with Sunlight is comprised of two scopes: 1) the development of an open data framework and associated policies that make sense for Glendale's operation; and, 2) the identification of opportunities for stakeholder engagement in collaborative problem-solving around open data concepts. Stakeholders are defined for this project as anyone using the information proactively published by the city, both internally and externally.

Analysis

Sunlight has provided the city with a wealth of tools, information, and examples to help guide staff in the process of building a foundation for open data. This support included developing an understanding of the city's current practices for data collection and release, reviewing best practices in open data in cities across the country, devising strategies for streamlining Glendale's data collection and release processes, and assisting

staff in the development of a draft open data resolution that incorporates many of the best practices in open data policy.

To gather public comments and feedback on the draft resolution, staff used a free online tool, MyMadison.io, to post the draft and collect comments. All comments can be accessed online at <https://mymadison.io/documents/city-of-glendale-draft-open-data-resolution>, but there were two questions worth noting. First, a concern about providing citizen information in a public forum. The draft resolution includes a statement about maintaining privacy, confidentiality, security and legal interests. The city is still required to follow redaction/exclusion policies related to the Freedom of Information Act and Arizona Public Records Law. The creation of an Open Data Program does not influence or change the type of information that the city is required to produce as a public entity. The second was a question about the cost of establishing and maintaining an Open Data Program. As was shared with Council during the prior study session, the recommended approach is to use existing or free resources to get started with the city's open data efforts while continuing the evaluation of both the city's and stakeholder needs. A significant component of this evaluation will include analyzing how the Open Data Program ties to other initiatives in the city's strategic plan which is currently being developed. The strategic planning process emphasizes the use of data and evidence for decision making which includes ensuring the city is using quality, meaningful data; and, the Open Data Program ties in to those principles.

Based on a What Works Cities certification assessment tool, two items were added to Section 2 of the resolution that had been previously shared with Council and published on MyMadison.io. The additions were statements that the city would publish data: 1) in accordance with an established quality assurance process that ensures data quality and usability; and, 2) in conjunction with stated goals, objectives, fundamental services, or core mission.

The proposed resolution outlines basic parameters for an Open Data Program, is intended to provide high level policy direction relating to such a program, and includes three basic tenets:

1. It is the city's policy to promote openness, transparency, and accountability through open data while maintaining privacy, confidentiality, security, and legal interests as required.
2. The City Manager, in coordination with other appointed officials, will develop an Open Data Program that provides for the proactive release of select data and establishes a process for prioritizing the publication of data; and,
3. The City Manager or designee will publicly report on the status of the Open Data Program annually, at a minimum.

For the second scope of work related to collaborative problem-solving, Sunlight examined public records requests received by the City Clerk's Office for a one-year period. The analysis identified frequently requested record sets, frequent requestors, and departments most impacted by the requests. The findings indicated that a significant amount of staff resources are consumed responding to public records requests for Development Services information. Sunlight's recommendation was to examine opportunities to proactively publish datasets in this area in an effort to decrease the amount of staff time spent on public records requests.

To determine what opportunities might exist, Sunlight conducted stakeholder interviews of frequent public records requestors to gain insights into the nature of their requests and to determine how the proactive

publication of data may impact future information needs. The full summary report of Sunlight's findings is attached for reference, but two key points regarding Development Services information were: 1) City information is necessary for real estate transactions to take place, for example, through zoning reports or appraisal reports provided to lenders; and 2) Online access saves time, and that timeliness is critical. Here is a sampling of the stakeholder quotes:

- "If getting permit information was easier, then [we could] do more and better appraisals...our business would be more efficient. Something that will allow [us] to find the permit information for any address online, would be very beneficial".
- "Each one these requests is a loan...cities sometimes don't realize that [by providing this information] they're helping a project access financing and helping the community in general"
- "The biggest issue is time. Sometimes there is a delay [in access to records] which can delay the process and could affect the assessed value of the house." This business explained that when they prepare zoning reports for properties in New York City, because the information is online, the process only takes about 30 minutes, whereas in a city like Glendale, that process takes days or weeks.
- "Access to information is a signal for business friendliness and a critical part of economic development."

The hopeful outcomes of creating an Open Data Program are to reduce time spent processing public records requests, increase transparency for the public, and ensure that the city and community has better information with which to make decisions. The program will utilize existing staffs' time to identify, evaluate, and prioritize datasets to be published. As the city continues to develop the program, the amount of staff time needed to maintain the program is likely to decrease over time.

Previous Related Council Action

On May 2, 2017, the City Council provided consensus direction to pursue the adoption of a Council resolution to create an Open Data Program and to seek public feedback on the proposed resolution.

On February 28, 2017, the City Council gathered to announce Glendale as a What Works City.

On February 7, 2017, the City Council provided final input and consensus direction on the recently formulated mission, vision, and value statements for the organization which are aligned with the proposed action.

Community Benefit/Public Involvement

The adoption of a resolution creating an Open Data Program demonstrates a commitment by the City Council to improve the delivery of services, increase transparency and access to public information, and enhance coordination and efficiencies among departments, partner organizations, and residents. It also makes the program actionable for the City Manager and executive team, creates the opportunity to engage the public and sets a public expectation, and establishes a framework for organizational accountability to the program for the public benefit. All of which are aligned with the organizational mission, vision, and values.

Public feedback on the proposed resolution was collected using MyMadison.io. The public outreach effort

was publicized through a press release, social media, boards and commission members, Council newsletters, Glendale Chamber of Commerce, and Legislative Link distribution lists. As of June 15, 2017, a total of 9 comments/questions were received, all of which were responded to. A total of 11 respondents voted in support of the document and none voted in opposition.

Budget and Financial Impacts

There is no associated budget request at this time. As the city continues to develop the sophistication of the Open Data Program, the city could consider using technology tools to enhance functionality, including systems that automatically integrate and update datasets providing real-time information. The development of any budgetary needs would be considered as part of the strategic planning process to ensure organizational alignment with Council priorities.