



To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

October 20, 2020

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SUBJECT: DOOR AND WINDOW REPLACEMENT PERMITS

The purpose of this report is to address concerns regarding City permitting requirements for residential door and window replacements. The City currently requires permits for the replacement of doors and windows in order to meet energy code, safety, and design requirements. A permit to replace windows and/or doors is available online and is processed in one day.

The State has adopted the 2015 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) as a minimum standard for building elements in order to achieve energy efficiency and improved air quality. The IECC contains requirements for doors and windows both in Solar Heat Gain Coefficients (SHGC) and R-value, which measures the resistance to heat flow. Requiring permits for replacement doors and windows ensures that these standards are met.

The adopted building code has several safety standards for windows. Windows from bedrooms must provide a specific openable area of 5.7 square feet to allow a person to escape through that window in case of an emergency. The building code also requires that safety glazing be located in windows that are adjacent to doors, stair landings, wet areas, and certain large panes of glass. Requiring permits for replacement windows allows the City to make sure that the egress capacity of a window is not reduced and that the proper type of glazing is used.

Windows and doors are primary character-defining features on buildings. In order to protect these important features, our local historic district regulations require the review of windows and doors in addition to other exterior items like roof and building materials. Illegal window replacement is one of the most contentious issues in historic districts. Requiring permits for doors and windows reduces the number of cases where incompatible windows and doors are installed without historic review. When a permit is requested for windows and doors, applicants are notified if the property has a historic designation. If so, the application will be reviewed for compliance with district design standards by historic preservation staff. If the proposed work meets local historic district regulations and the Secretary of the Interior of Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, they receive a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the proposed work. If we did not require a permit, it would severely limit our ability to administer our local preservation ordinance and meet the condition of our Certified Local Government (CLG) agreement with the State of Texas and the Federal government.

City staff surveyed area municipalities and other large cities in Texas to assess their practices with residential replacement door and window permits. The majority of cities require permits for both residential window and door replacements, as indicated in the table below.

Permitting Requirements for Residential Door and Window Replacements									
	Fort Worth	Dallas	Austin	San Antonio	El Paso	Arlington	Plano	Denton	Irving
Doors	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Windows	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Historic Districts	Both	Both	Both	Both	Both	Both	Both	Both	NA

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SUBJECT: DOOR AND WINDOW REPLACEMENT PERMITS**Recommendation**

Staff is able to recommend that we no longer require permits for replacement of residential doors that maintain the same opening size and where the dwelling does not have a historic designation. Door replacements do not have as many safety concerns associated with them as window replacements. Amendments to the Administrative Building Code will be required to enact this change and are proposed to be effective January 2021. Staff will continue to look for ways to streamline and improve the permitting process for our customers. This includes adding to the list of permits that are currently issued with little or no plan review and verified by inspectors in the field, including solar panel installations, siding replacement, foundation repairs and replacement of residential roof decking.

If you have any questions on this report please contact Allison Gray, Assistant Director and Building Official, Development Services, at 817-392-8030 or allison.gray@fortworthtexas.gov.

David Cooke
City Manager