



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:
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Agenda Item Number: 4

Agenda Date: March 21, 2025

In Control: Planning and Community Development Committee

DEPARTMENT: Development Services Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Michael Shannon

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Proposal to create an Urban Entertainment District Pilot Program in the City of San Antonio.

SUMMARY:

In January 2022, OutFront Media and the Urban Activation Institute approached the Development Services Department (DSD) and the Department of Arts & Culture (DA&C) to propose downtown Art and Entertainment Districts in San Antonio with outdoor digital media platforms. The proposal seeks to allow off-premise advertising in these districts and requires changes to the City's sign code.

In March 2023, the Planning and Community Development Committee (PCDC) instructed city staff to collaborate with the proponents to explore the proposal further. In January 2024, DSD recommended to the PCDC that staff hold community meetings for feedback on these districts. The PCDC supported this plan and requested engagement with key stakeholders and attention to safety standards. City staff is now ready to outline the program for potential pilot adoption.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Development Services Department (DSD) staff was approached in January 2022 by OutFront Media and the Urban Activation Institute members to discuss a proposal for San Antonio to create one or more downtown Art and Entertainment Districts powered by outdoor media platforms. The parties presented their proposal as part of the 2023 Sign Code Update process in 2022. The proposal's intent would allow off-premise advertising as part of the Urban Entertainment Districts and require changes to the City's sign code (City Code Chapter 28). The main parts of the proposal are summarized below:

- The City would create one or more urban entertainment districts through an ordinance allowing digital platforms/screens to be installed on approved buildings within the district. The proponents used similar programs established in Denver, CO, Atlanta, GA, and West Hollywood, CA, as examples.
- The digital screens would allow approved off-premise advertising that met specific civic and community-approved criteria.
- The program would also require a minimum amount of time for public messaging and approved digital art to be shown on the screens.
- The City would receive a percentage of each digital platform's revenue, which the City could then use for whichever City programs are allowed by the approved policy. While most of the discussion referenced other cities that used the revenue to support the jurisdictions' Arts programs, the proponents indicated that the City could decide how to use the funds generated.

The 2023 Sign Code Update Stakeholder Committee decided not to support the proposal to create these Urban Entertainment Districts because the committee members felt it was outside the scope of their committee. They stated that this was a City policy discussion for review, mainly due to the revenue-sharing aspect of the proposal.

The request to create a proposal for an Urban Entertainment District in San Antonio was further discussed at the March 2023 Planning and Community Development Committee (PCDC) meeting as part of the 2023 San Antonio Sign Code Update. During that meeting, PCDC members instructed City staff to continue working with the Outfront Media and Urban Activation Institute representatives to review further and develop options for this program in San Antonio.

In January 2024, DSD presented to PCDC and recommended holding a series of community meetings to obtain feedback on creating one or more of these Urban Entertainment Districts in San Antonio, including specific locations that should be included and restricted from making such an ordinance. The PCDC supported the staff's recommendation and requested staff include key stakeholder groups in the meetings and consider safety and illumination standards. City staff has met with the key stakeholders and is ready to describe the feedback received and provide a path for San Antonio to possibly adopt a pilot program in the city.

ISSUE:

As part of an overall economic development program, cities such as Denver, CO, Atlanta, GA, and West Hollywood, CA, have developed Urban Entertainment Districts where enhanced interaction between the streets, sidewalks, and public spaces are expressed through permissive sign

ordinances that emphasize the unique character of the buildings in an area where large facades and notable use buildings such as sports arenas present unique opportunities to create and define a "district identity." The possibility of creating one or more of these districts in San Antonio was discussed during the 2023 San Antonio Sign Code update process. Additionally, prior PCDC direction was to continue to work on this program, bring back feedback from a variety of stakeholders, and propose a pilot program for San Antonio.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

ALTERNATIVES:

The PCDC could choose to deny staff's recommendation to create a pilot program and leave the Chapter 28 Sign Code as is.

RECOMMENDATION:

City staff recommends that the creation of a pilot program to be considered by City Council.