



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**  
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**Agenda Item Number:** 2

**Agenda Date:** April 24, 2025

**In Control:** Planning and Community Development Committee

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**DEPARTMENT:** Development Services Department

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Michael Shannon

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:**

Proposal to create a Digital Media and Arts 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 Digital Media and Arts Pilot Program in San Antonio. 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. In March 2025, DSD presented the results of the stakeholder surveys and a proposal for a pilot program. PCDC requested coordination with TxDOT and the development of

2-3 recommendations for the committee to consider. City staff is now ready to present potential options for the pilot for PCDC consideration.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Development Services Department (DSD) staff were 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 areas powered by outdoor digital 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 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 a Digital Media and Arts Pilot Program, previously referred to as Urban Entertainment Districts, 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 a Digital Media and Arts Pilot Program in San Antonio, including specific locations that should be included and restricted from making such an ordinance. Staff held a total of four community meetings; two in-person and two virtual. The PCDC supported the staff's recommendation and requested that the staff include key stakeholder groups in the meetings and consider safety and illumination standards.

In March 2025, DSD presented the survey and stakeholder meeting results to PCDC and

recommended a pilot program. PCDC recommended developing 2-3 potential options for a pilot program and coordinating with TxDOT. City staff is ready to present the potential options for a pilot program to PCDC for consideration in the following locations:

- Pearl Brewery District
- UTSA District
- Downtown West District
- Downtown East District
- Downtown South District
- Alamodome East District
- Blue Star District
- Port San Antonio
- Brooks City Base
- Toyota Field

City staff is ready to present the potential options for a pilot program to PCDC for consideration.

#### **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 develop options for the committee to consider in instituting a pilot program.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

N/A

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

The PCDC could modify staff's proposed options for a pilot program or decline to initiate it.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

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