



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Item Number: 2

Agenda Date: June 29, 2023

In Control: Community Health, Environment and Culture Committee

DEPARTMENT: Department of Arts and Culture

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Krystal Jones

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: District 8

SUBJECT:

Briefing and possible action on the creation of a Cultural Heritage District along Wurzbach Road in District 8.

SUMMARY:

On March 24, 2023, following a briefing by the Department of Arts & Culture in collaboration with the Economic Development Department regarding the State of Texas' Cultural District Program, the Main Street America Pilot Program, and the Department of Arts & Culture's Cultural District Toolkit, the City Council Governance Committee referred this item to the Community, Health, and Environment Committee with the intent to establish Wurzbach Road as a Cultural Corridor.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

San Antonio is uniquely defined by its multicultural influences and origins, and it hosts several corridors that are renowned for their cultural importance in the form of retail, restaurants, arts, and entertainment. District 8 is the most demographically diverse district in San Antonio. Census data shows that two of the three census tracts with the highest percentage of Asian families in Bexar County along both sides of Wurzbach Road, from NW Military Highway to Fredericksburg Road.

The corridor is known for its abundance of iconic Mediterranean, North African, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian cuisine and retail establishments. Many large employers in the area (e.g. USAA and Medical Center hospitals) have hired high numbers of professionals hailing from Silk Road countries. Furthermore, this corridor also hosts the Center for Refugee Services and the surrounding area hosts San Antonio's largest community of resettled refugees. The surrounding area also features multiple churches and temples representing the diverse Silk Road faith traditions.

To recognize the cultural importance and significance of this area of Wurzbach Road, Councilmember Peláez submitted a request for the creation of a Cultural Corridor Pilot along Wurzbach Road between Fredericksburg Road and NW Military Highway that would designate the area as the Silk Road Cultural Corridor in recognition and celebration of the Middle Eastern, African, and Asian cultural traditions and communities which make this corridor unique.

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ISSUE:

The Department of Arts & Culture, in coordination with the Office of Historic Preservation, will brief the Community, Health and Environment Committee on the Office of Historic Preservation's Cultural Heritage District Program that works to build awareness and knowledge of San Antonio's living heritage. Cultural Heritage recognition is designed for neighborhoods, corridors, individual buildings, sites, objects, and elements of social heritage that hold historic or cultural value to the community beyond architectural value. Cultural Heritage recognition is an honorific title that is bestowed by the Historic and Design Review Commission upon recommendation from staff. The first Cultural Heritage district was recognized in 2005.

With direction from the Community, Health and Environment Committee, the Office of Historic Preservation, in coordination with the Department of Arts & Culture, will move forward with the process to establish and recognize the Wurzbach Road area as the Silk Road Cultural Heritage District.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends working through the Office of Historic Preservation's Cultural Heritage District Program to establish the Wurzbach Road area as the Silk Road Cultural Heritage District.