



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

Agenda Date: April 18, 2023

In Control: Zoning Commission Meeting

DEPARTMENT: Development Services Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Michael Shannon

COUNCIL DISTRICT IMPACTED: District 8

SUBJECT:

A request to Amend Chapter 35, Unified Development Code, Section 35-399.01, by amending the Design Criteria of the adopted Corridor Plan for “GC-1” Hill Country Gateway Corridor.

SUMMARY:

The proposed amendment is to the Unified Development Code, Section 35-399.01 and the Design Guideline information for the “GC-1” Hill Country Gateway Corridor. The amendment if recommended for Approval would allow the use of on-premises digital signs. The size of the digital sign will be limited to a maximum of 25% of the sign face allowed for each property.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Hill Country Gateway Corridor Overlay District was originally created on June 1, 2003 to establish development standards along IH-10 from UTSA Boulevard to the limits of the City of San Antonio.

The Hill Country Gateway Corridor District (“GC-1”) provides site development standards for properties within 1,000 feet of Interstate 10 between UTSA Blvd and the northern City Limits. The standards primarily address building placement, landscaping, building materials and signage to promote a coordinated development scheme for the Corridor.

In May of 2015, proposed changes to the Hill Country Gateway Corridor guidelines were presented to the Zoning Commission. The Commission recommended prohibition of digital signs and the City Council agreed and the guidelines for the Corridor were approved with digital signs prohibited on June 18, 2015.

Since the adoption of the Hill Country Gateway Corridor Overlay in June 2015, Development Services has inadvertently issued six (6) digital sign permits (one re-face of an existing sign, one increase in size of an existing sign, and four new digital signs) within the overlay district. Once Staff was made aware of the errors, no new permits were issued and two (2) of the signs installed have remained unused by the owners.

In an effort to address the digital sign discrepancy and permits issued in error, Staff determined that the best path forward would be to address the item as part of the update to Chapter 28, Signs and Billboards. The Sign Code update was delayed for two years due to the COVID pandemic.

The Building-Related and Fire Codes Appeals and Advisory Board (BRFCAAB) began the process of updating Chapter 28 in early 2022, by initiating the creation of a Sign Code Committee.

As part of the public process the community and stakeholders were notified of the update process to Chapter 28 and provided a form for submitting proposed changes to Development Services.\

As part of the amendments to Chapter 28, a proposal was made to remove the prohibition of on-premises digital signs along the Hill Country Gateway Corridor.

The Sign Code Committee created a working group that included sign industry representatives, Real Estate Council of San Antonio, and community representatives. The working group recommended that Development Services seek community feedback on the proposed change that excluded digital signs from the Corridor before the Sign Code Committee voted on a recommendation.

Staff initiated the public process by hosting two (2) community meetings in February 2023. The notification included 741 property owners within the overlay via United States Postal Service and by email and social media to community and business organizations. Both meetings had a total of 9 attendees.

Following the public meetings, the Sign Code Committee and BRFCAAB recommended Approval of removing the prohibition of digital signs in the Hill Country Gateway Corridor.

ISSUE:

Although the amendment was discussed and recommend for Approval as part of the revisions to Chapter 28, the Unified Development Code and Design Guidelines in Chapter 35, must also be amended to reflect the change.

ALTERNATIVES:

If the amendment to allow digital signs is not recommended for Approval by the Zoning Commission and is not approved by City Council, any existing digital signs will be classified as existing nonconforming to allow their use. Additionally, if disapproved the current language in Chapter 35 and in the Design Guidelines will remain unchanged and digital signs will continue not to be allowed.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Sign Code Committee and Building-Related and Fire Codes Appeals and Advisory Board recommend Approval of allowing digital signs in the Hill Country Gateway Corridor. If approved, this would mean an amendment to Chapter 35 and the Design Guidelines to remove any language which does not allow digital signs, as well as an amendment to Chapter 28.