



# City of San Antonio

## Legislation Details (With Text)

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**Type:** Staff Briefing - Without Ordinance

**In control:** Culture and Neighborhood Services Committee

**On agenda:** 1/7/2021

**Title:** Briefing on the Neighborhood Engagement Unit. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Verónica R. Soto, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

**Sponsors:**

**Indexes:**

**Code sections:**

**Attachments:** 1. Staff Presentation

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**DEPARTMENT:** Neighborhood and Housing Services

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Verónica R. Soto, FAICP, Director

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** City-Wide

**SUBJECT:**

Neighborhood Engagement Unit

**SUMMARY:**

The Neighborhood Engagement Unit focuses on neighborhood engagement and working with the neighborhood associations to address their areas of concern.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Neighborhood Engagement Unit supports the department’s mission to improve the quality of life of residents by ensuring everyone lives with dignity in healthy and affordable neighborhoods. In the Fiscal Year 2018 adopted budget included funding to hire four (4) new positions for neighborhood engagement. These positions included a Neighborhood Engagement Administrator and three Neighborhood Engagement Officers. The division was created to strengthen relationships and communication channels with neighborhoods, provide training and resources to build association’s organizational capacity.

The following goals were established for the Neighborhood Engagement Division:

- Maintain updates and increase the number of neighborhood associations, HOAs and Community Organizations that are on the Neighborhood Registry
- Attend 150 community meetings, associations meetings and events
- Host a community-wide Neighborhood Summit, to include presentations/discussions around topics and

services relevant to neighborhoods and Neighborhood Associations

- Host city-wide, civic engagement classes through Neighborhood Leadership Academy, graduating 80 residents annually

The Neighborhood Registry has increased from 277 associations in 2018 to 403 associations to date. City Departments use the Registry to identify Neighborhood Association points of contact for communication regarding capital projects, development projects and other improvements or initiatives throughout the City. The Registry is a communication tool only. If a Neighborhood Association is on the Registry, it will receive notices of zoning cases and other items related to neighborhood plans, permit requests, and public meetings.

On February 10, 2020, staff presented information on the background, history and intent of the Neighborhood Association and Community Organization Policy to the Culture and Neighborhood Services Council Committee (CNSCC) and sought input from the Council Committee about how to improve the registry. The presentation, which included no policy recommendations, provided a brief background and overview of the policy and highlighted specific issues that had been brought up by some community members regarding communication and the process to register if an association shares a geographic boundary with an association that is already registered.

Staff also presented the schedule for several community and stakeholder meetings to be held in March to solicit feedback on the policy. Due to the pandemic, the meetings were rescheduled to November and December. Staff returned to the CNSCC on November 2, 2020, to reinitiate the process and brief the Committee of the effort to solicit input on the policy. Staff briefed the Board of Adjustment, Zoning Commission, and Planning Commission on November 15-17<sup>th</sup> and held three virtual Community Input Sessions on December 1-3<sup>rd</sup> and released a survey on December 4<sup>th</sup> to gather input from residents, neighborhood associations, homeowner associations and community organizations.

The Neighborhood Engagement Team has presented and/or provided program information at over 250 plus community events, neighborhood associations meetings and events city wide. In June 2019, NHSD partnered with local partners to host a Neighborhood Summit, providing resources and presentations to over 100 neighborhood residents and leaders. The Neighborhood Engagement team has also partner with Council Offices to host three HOA Symposiums to address concerns of residents. In addition to representing the department at a various meetings and events, the Neighborhood Engagement Team has developed the marketing material for the department's programs and is often responsible for sending communication out to the neighborhood residents, leaders, and community partners. The team has also forged working relationships with all departments where community engagement is needed, as well as external partner agencies, to increase participation from 40 neighborhood leaders to 80 neighbor leaders in the citywide Neighborhood Leadership Academy which supports the development of neighborhood leaders.

The Neighborhood Engagement Division is currently comprised of a Neighborhood Engagement Administrator and two Neighborhood Engagement Officers focused on meeting the evolving needs of the neighborhoods by building a toolkit of resources, workshops and trainings based on the feedback received from the neighborhoods.

## **ISSUE:**

This briefing is intended to provide the Culture and Neighborhood Services Council Committee background on the Neighborhood Engagement team that focuses on neighborhood engagement and working with the neighborhood associations to address their areas of concern.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

None. Briefing only.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

None. Briefing only.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Briefing only.