



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number: 16-5066

Agenda Item Number: 13.

Agenda Date: 10/13/2016

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Office of Historic Preservation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Shanon Shea Miller

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Districts 1 and 5

SUBJECT:

Consideration of proposed amendments to the Unified Development Code including design requirements for a new River Improvement Overlay District relating to San Pedro Creek (RIO-7).

SUMMARY:

The proposed amendments will revise the existing language for properties in the River Improvement Overlay (RIO) districts to include San Pedro Creek and create a new zoning district relating specifically to San Pedro Creek (RIO-7). The proposed zoning district will place design requirements for both public and private properties in the vicinity of San Pedro Creek.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The UDC currently authorizes six RIO districts which guide development for properties that either abut or are in close proximity to the San Antonio River. The RIO districts provide design requirements which inform the Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC) process as well as list land use prohibitions which prevent undesirable uses along the San Antonio River. The current RIO districts were created in 2002 and updated in 2011.

The RIO districts have been successful in anticipating developments which potentially impact the quality and character of the San Antonio River. The public improvements of the River Walk are a desirable amenity that has attracted investment in the center city. With the completion of the Museum Reach and Mission Reach expansions, dozens of mixed-use and multi-family projects have since been developed in close proximity to the River. The existing UDC requirements for RIO properties ensure that new developments follow good urban design practice, contribute to broader neighborhood planning goals, and respond to the River itself in regards to

building design and orientation. Most importantly, development projects are reviewed for conformance with the design requirements as part of a public hearing process through the HDRC.

The current San Pedro Creek improvements project is expected to have a similar catalytic effect, and new development projects are anticipated as a result of the public investment. Project stakeholders including the San Antonio River Authority (project manager and primary land holder) and Bexar County (primary funder) have requested that City staff apply design controls to the properties adjacent to the creek in order to ensure compatible development. Earlier this year, SARA contracted with a consultant to develop design requirements which would guide the draft amendments. Two public informational meetings were held in March 2016 to discuss the project and the proposed design requirements. Stakeholder groups including Bexar County, the San Pedro Creek Advisory Committee, the King William Association, the AIA, and several private groups have all provided comments which have guided the proposed amendments.

Following the initial public feedback period, the draft UDC amendments were finalized with City staff and have been vetted through a public hearing process. The draft amendments have been made available on the web since May of this year. Both the HDRC and Zoning Commission recommended approval of the draft in August, and the item was recommended by the Neighborhoods and Livability Committee on September 19.

The proposed amendments will allow for the existing RIO requirements to be applied to the San Pedro Creek area in addition to the San Antonio River. Due to the unique characteristics of the creek, RIO-7 will also feature special considerations for site plan development and building design that are consistent with the Downtown Design Guide and respond to the conditions resulting from the public improvements project.

The boundaries of the proposed RIO-7 district are preliminary at this time. This ordinance is limited to the UDC amendments which authorize the creation of the district and outline the design requirements. The RIO-7 zoning overlay will be applied in a separate zoning case this fall which will follow the notification requirements established by the UDC. Approximately 150 properties fall within the proposed boundaries. The large majority of these properties currently have some level of design review either through existing historic designation or by falling within the Downtown Design Guide.

ISSUE:

The City and its stakeholders anticipate an influx of development along the San Pedro Creek public improvements. The addition of a new RIO district for the creek will ensure that projects that potentially impact this important public amenity both complement the creek and enhance the built environment of the surrounding area.

ALTERNATIVES:

New design requirements would not be established for properties adjacent to the San Pedro Creek public improvements. Some properties would continue to receive design review under the Historic Design Guidelines or Downtown Design Guide. Development projects could potentially impact the creek with no public design review process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no anticipated fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the proposed UDC Amendments.