



City of San Antonio

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: 17-4310

Type: Staff Briefing - Without Ordinance

In control: Governance Committee

On agenda: 8/30/2017

Title: A Council Consideration Request by Councilmember Manny Peláez, District 8, to improve the existing neighborhood registration program. [Peter Zaroni, Deputy City Manager; Verónica R. Soto, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. CCR Pelaez - Neighborhood Registration program

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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DEPARTMENT: Neighborhood and Housing Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Verónica R. Soto

COUNCIL DISTRICT(S) IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Briefing on the Council Consideration Request to consider enhancements to the existing neighborhood registration program

SUMMARY:

This item includes a briefing on a Council Consideration Request (CCR) by Councilmember Manny Pelaez for Neighborhood and Housing Services Department staff to consider potential ways to improve the neighborhood registration program, Section 35-408 of the Unified Development Code, to increase the number of neighborhoods registered with the City.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The City maintains a neighborhood registry which includes both mandatory homeowners' associations and voluntary neighborhood associations, in accordance with Section 35-408 of the Unified Development Code (UDC). According to Section 35-408, "Neighborhood registration is established in order to provide notification of neighborhoods for purposes of relevant zoning cases, neighborhood plans, community plans and perimeter plans..." To complete neighborhood registration with the City, the following items are currently required per the UDC:

- A map or written description of the neighborhood boundaries
- A list of the officers in the association, including their address and phone number
- A signed copy of the adopted by-laws
- A regular meeting location and a regular meeting date
- Date the association was founded
- Number of association members
- Approximate number of housing units in the area
- Approximate population of neighborhood

Registered neighborhood associations (NAs) receive mailed notification of zoning changes or planned unit development plans requested within, or within two hundred (200) feet of, the neighborhood boundary.

As of July 21, 2017, there were 268 NAs registered with the City. Many additional NAs exist but are not registered. Registered NAs are required to provide updated contact information, officer information, and bylaws annually; however, compliance by registered NAs has historically been low. Between July 2016 and July 2017, only 32% of NAs updated their information with the city, 41% did not been update in over a year, and the remaining 27% did not been update in more than two years. The City conducts outreach to all existing NAs annually to request required annual registration. The last outreach was conducted in July 2016, which included mailing postcards and emailing the contact person associated with the NA. The 2017 outreach effort is currently underway and is expected to be completed by September.

The current policy states that the City may remove an organization from the registry if the organization has not been updated in over one year. Before removing NAs from the City's registration, staff make multiple attempts to reach the contact persons on file. The last NA removal effort, conducted in March 2016, resulted in the removal of 53 NAs who did not conform to the annual registration process. Those NAs removed had been unresponsive for four to six years prior to removal.

The principal benefit of registration is that only registered NAs receive notification of applications for rezoning and planned unit development plans. This courtesy notice is sent to the point of contact on file with the city. Registered NAs located within a designated SA Tomorrow plan area are also provided a seat on the respective

plan area's advisory team.

ISSUE:

The City recognizes the need for improved communication and engagement with neighborhood residents. As a result, the City Manager created the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department earlier this year with the intent of increasing responsiveness and engagement with neighborhood groups. NHSD staff is proposing the creation of a Neighborhood Engagement Unit that would be responsible for the Neighborhood Registration process in order to increase the number of registered Neighborhood Associations and to ensure increased compliance with the City's annual registration process. Improvements to staffing will be required to increase engagement with NAs, depending on the strategies approved. A total of four staff positions are proposed as part of the Fiscal Year 2018 budget improvement process to bolster the City's efforts to engage with neighborhoods and residents more broadly.

Staff proposes additional regular engagement with NAs to encourage initial registration, which could include:

- Marketing to NAs through commonly used digital platforms such as Nextdoor;
- Attending meetings of non-registered NAs and encouraging officers to consider registration;
- Mailing postcards to non-registered NAs encouraging registration;
- Posting materials at public meetings and events encouraging NAs to register; and,
- Other strategies as appropriate/feasible.

Staff also proposes steps to maintain a more updated and accurate list of registered NAs, which could include:

- Administrative changes to the UDC to update the NA registration deadline;
- Attending meetings of non-compliant NAs to gather updated contact information;
- Actively removing groups that do not re-register on a timely basis; and,
- Other strategies as appropriate/feasible.

Changes to the Neighborhood Registration process will require an off-cycle amendment to the UDC; however these changes are administrative in nature and do not impact development. Following consideration by the Governance Committee, the proposed changes will be reviewed by a technical advisory committee, then considered by the Planning Commission and/or Zoning Commission, then brought to the Comprehensive Plan Committee, and ultimately considered by City Council for adoption into the UDC.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Governance Committee may elect not to recommend further development of the items for consideration in the CCR initiated by Councilmember Pelaez.

FISCAL IMPACT:

A total of five (5) additional staff positions are proposed for Fiscal Year 2018 to accomplish the City's goals of broader neighborhood engagement, which includes responsibility for the Neighborhood Registration process.

RECOMMENDATION:

NHSD staff recommends that the Governance Committee initiate the staff development of an enhanced Neighborhood Registration process in order to increase the number of registered Neighborhood Associations through implementation of strategic regular neighborhood engagement and to maintain a more updated and accurate list of registered Neighborhood Associations by more actively removing non-compliant groups that do not re-register on a timely basis. Final staff-recommended enhancements to the process will be referred to the Comprehensive Plan Committee and ultimately to City Council.