



# City of San Antonio

## Legislation Details (With Text)

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

**On agenda:** 4/5/2021

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

**Sponsors:**

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**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 Strategy

### SUMMARY:

The Neighborhood Engagement Unit has developed a Neighborhood Engagement Strategy focused on improving communication and increasing engagement opportunities with residents and neighborhoods.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On January 7, 2021, staff provided a briefing to the Culture and Neighborhood Services Council Committee (CNSCC) on the Neighborhood Engagement team that works with neighborhood associations and community organizations to strengthen relationships, improve communication channels, and provide training and resources to build organizational capacity. Staff shared preliminary community engagement concepts developed to address the need for improved communication with residents and neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood and Housing Services Department hosted three facilitated virtual Community Input Sessions and provided a survey in December 2021 to better understand the neighborhood communication and

engagement needs. The response received from residents and neighborhoods highlighted the need for alternative communication methods for our residents. Stakeholders shared concerns about not receiving information from the City because their association is not on the Neighborhood Registry or the inability for a neighborhood association to distribute the information in a timely manner. Some of the feedback received included the need for communication to all residents regardless of association participation.

The proposed community engagement concepts presented to CNSCC were developed into a Neighborhood Engagement Strategy to address the communication and engagement deficiencies from current City efforts expressed by residents and neighborhoods. The development of the Neighborhood Engagement Strategy was informed by residents and neighborhood leaders who were selected to participate by City Council District Offices 1-10. NHSD staff hosted 6 focus group meetings from March 3, 2021 to March 18, 2021 and presented the following concepts: Resident Connect, President Power Hour, Neighborhood Mentorship Program, Neighborhood Leaders Quarterly, Developer Roundtable, Neighborhood Engagement Stakeholder Group, and Community Partnership League.

The 22 focus group participants provided their input and recommendations for the community engagement concepts which staff developed into a Neighborhood Engagement Strategy. On March 29, 2021, the department invited residents, neighborhood associations, HOAs, and community partners to participate in a virtual Community Conversations Input Session to learn about the Neighborhood Engagement Strategy and allow for additional feedback on the engagement concepts that were informed by their neighbors.

The Neighborhood Engagement Strategy includes the following three engagement strategy areas: Community Engaged Learning, Community Engaged Messaging, and Community Engaged Conversation.

The Community Engaged Learning focuses on assisting residents with building capacity within their neighborhoods and developing a heightened understanding of City services and resources that are available to them. The strategy will be executed by the following concepts:

- The **Neighborhood Leadership Academy (NLA)\***. The NLA is in its 7<sup>th</sup> iteration and has progressively evolved to include more participants and deliver more diverse topics relevant to residents across San Antonio.
- The **Neighborhood Mentorship Program** will be created to bring together individual residents or neighborhood association leaders who ask for help with either reviving a previously dormant association or create a newly formed association that could benefit from the guidance and mentorship from residents who are experienced and knowledgeable about how an association can be structured and governed for the benefit of its members.
- The **Neighborhood Engagement Webpage** has been updated to provide additional content for residents and neighborhoods to consume as they need. Newsletters, informational videos, downloadable guides and Internet weblinks to resources outside the City are all gathered into one place for residents to find. New content is continually being added.

The Community Engaged Messaging focuses on helping to increase communication and customization of information received by residents. This strategy will be executed by the following concepts:

- The **Resident Connect\*** system currently under development with the guidance of the Government & Public Affairs Department will unite with our future efforts to manage resident interactions as well as improve communication with residents that opt-in for different ways they prefer to receive information.
- The **Neighborhood Brief Newsletter\*** is being published weekly and emailed to the Point-of-Contact for associations on record with NHSD and to residents and external partners that have been added to our communication distribution list. The Brief includes news and updates relevant to residents and neighborhoods such as current surveys open for input, planned community meetings, as well as community health bulletins and other timely news.

The Community Engaged Conversations focuses on enhancing opportunities for resident and neighborhood feedback and collaboration between residents and the City. This strategy will be executed by the following concepts:

- The **Neighborhood Leaders Quarterly** meeting will bring together residents who may have a leadership role in organizations such as a neighborhood association, HOA, educational institution, non-profit and graduates of the Neighborhood Leadership Academy. Participants can set the agenda and highlight certain topics that are important to them so that solutions and joint collaborations with City leaders can be explored to ensure needs are being met.
- The **Neighborhood Engagement Stakeholders Group** will bring together representatives from community organizations, neighborhood associations, residents, business owners and others to act as a sounding board and source of feedback on current and new Engagement strategies so that they can improved and refined.
- The **Community Conversations\*** is an engagement opportunity to gather feedback and share updates with a larger group of individuals to include residents, neighborhood associations, HOAs, community partners, and City staff.
- The **Community Partnership League\*** is focused on collaborating with stakeholders and community partners who engage residents and neighborhoods to provide programs/services that improve residents' quality of life and strengthen neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Engagement Team will initiate meetings with community-minded partners, such as AACOG, CPS Energy, SAWS, VIA, Non-profit Delegate Agencies, and others to collaborate on community events, provide wrap around services for residents, and promote information regarding resources and services to the neighborhoods.
- The **Developer Roundtable** will host developer workshops/meetings to allow developers to share project information with residents and neighborhood associations. This concept will require further assessment due to feedback received as this may not be a concept for NHSD to lead.

These strategies would be launched in May 2021. NHSD will continue to deploy surveys to check in with

residents and neighborhoods as to how the department is doing and to stay well-informed about the needs of the community. The focus groups and community input sessions will also continue and have been helpful with getting to know residents, brainstorming ideas and developing resources and tools for the neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Engagement Unit will continue to attend neighborhood meetings to provide updates and listen to what items are important to the neighborhoods.

\*Current program or development underway

### **ISSUE:**

This briefing is intended to provide the Culture and Neighborhood Services Council Committee background on the Neighborhood Engagement Strategy developed to improve communication and increase engagement opportunities.

### **ALTERNATIVES:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact as this item is for briefing purposes only.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.