



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:17-6630

Agenda Item Number: 6.

Agenda Date: 12/12/2017

In Control: Governance Committee

DEPARTMENT: Office of Historic Preservation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Shanon Miller, Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: All

SUBJECT:

Potential amendments to the Unified Development Code relating to the establishment of Viewshed Protection Districts.

SUMMARY:

District 7 Councilwoman Ana E. Sandoval and District 2 Councilman William “Cruz” Shaw have submitted a Council Consideration Request to initiate the process to consider additional San Antonio landmarks for viewshed protection and to enable the establishment of potential Viewshed Protection Districts. The CCR also directs OHP staff to study additional views and vistas of historic places, landmarks, and cultural resources for consideration for viewshed protection.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The UDC provides designation criteria and a list of sites that are eligible for viewshed protection. The list currently identifies 15 historic sites that are eligible for a single Viewshed Protection District.

According to the UDC, the district area must lie within a major entrance or front door of the eligible site. Currently there is only one Viewshed Protection District of this type in place: the “VP-1” Alamo Viewshed Protection District. This district is designed to prevent a tall building or structure from being erected to the east of the Alamo which would impact views of the front façade of the chapel.

This section also indicates that additional mission protection not within the major entrance or front door may be granted based on written descriptions, survey information, photos, maps or illustrations in accordance with the

standards and process of this section. Such protection may be related to corridors, outward views and other visual links. This additional type of protection was accomplished in 2014 with the adoption of the Mission Protection Overlay Districts (MPOD's) and may be expanded for additional sites.

Viewshed protection districts and view corridors are a common tool used by cities to safeguard iconic and historic views and vistas. San Antonio has used Viewshed Protection Districts as a development tool since 2003.

ISSUE:

The current provisions of the UDC limit the types and opportunities for viewshed protection. For instance, the provisions do not currently allow for more than one view to be protected from a single site. The UDC also does not consider natural views and requires that protected sites be buildings with a "front door". Other structures, such as bridges or public art pieces, are not currently considered.

Viewshed Protection Districts function as a zoning overlay. With a district in place, individual projects within the district are reviewed for conformance with any imposed height restrictions as part of the development review process.

Any amendments to the designation criteria would not automatically result in a new district or associated regulations for the listed sites. With direction from Council, staff would further explore the best approaches for each site and work with the public to propose and adopt any new zoning districts.

ALTERNATIVES:

As an alternative, no UDC amendments would be made and the designation criteria would remain in place.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Costs associated with UDC amendments include legally-required notifications and publications. These costs are currently budgeted.

With Council direction to move forward with a new Viewshed Protection District or other zoning overlays, professional services will be required to provide a survey and metes and bounds description for any new district. Consultant fees could range between \$5,000 and \$15,000 per site depending on the complexity and number of desired viewsheds for each site.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends working with the City Council Arts, Culture, and Heritage Committee to explore additional sites for viewshed protection, develop specific approaches for each, and to prioritize sites for the establishment of additional Viewshed Protection Districts.