



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:18-6959

Agenda Item Number: 3.

Agenda Date: 12/11/2018

In Control: Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee

DEPARTMENT: Office of Historic Preservation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Shanon Miller, Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Districts 1 & 7

SUBJECT:

Staff briefing on viewsheds initiative and current proposal for Woodlawn Lake.

SUMMARY:

District 7 Councilwoman Sandoval and District 2 Councilman Shaw have submitted a City Council Resolution to initiate the process to consider additional San Antonio landmarks for viewshed protection and to enable the establishment of potential Viewshed Protection Districts. Staff will provide a briefing and recommended next steps for prioritized sites.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

During 2018, OHP staff facilitated numerous opportunities for public input and began the process of drafting UDC amendments which would expand opportunities for City Council to create new viewshed protection districts where appropriate. Also as a result of public input and review by a technical advisory committee, four sites were previously recommended by the Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee for further exploration: San Fernando Cathedral, Tower Life Building, Hays Street Bridge, and Basilica of the Little Flower / Woodlawn Lake.

ISSUE:

The current viewshed ordinance only allows new viewshed districts for certain buildings in San Antonio. The addition of new sites that do not represent a building, such as Woodlawn Lake or the Hays Street Bridge, would require UDC amendments. As a regulatory tool, viewsheds are limited to very specific parameters defined by a singular point of origin and directional projection. In some instances, staff has determined that a viewshed is

not the best tool to guide general neighborhood scale, scenic and natural areas, or unconventional sites (such as bridges or lakes). In the past, the City has utilized other zoning overlay types such as River Improvement or Corridor Overlays to guide building height and scale in sensitive areas.

With a zoning district in place with controls for building height, individual projects within the district are reviewed for conformance with any imposed height restrictions as part of the development review process. This results in the ability to regulate building scale and positioning in proximity to a defined resource such as Woodlawn Lake or the Hays Street Bridge.

The City is celebrating the 100th-Anniverisary of Woodlawn Lake in 2018. In recognition of this important public resource, and following public interest in protecting existing outward views from Woodlawn Lake Park, Councilwoman Ana Sandoval has requested that steps to preserve the scenic and natural qualities of Woodlawn Lake be prioritized. Staff will work with stakeholders and Districts 1 and 7 regarding the best overlay tool to protect the neighborhood character.

Staff has also determined that the viewshed is not the appropriate mechanism for concerns surrounding the Hays Street Bridge. Staff recommends working with stakeholders and the Council office to identify a more appropriate tool. Staff intends to initiate an update to the Downtown Design Guide, which applies to the area around Hays Street Bridge, and may be the best mechanism for guiding development in the area.

For San Fernando Cathedral, staff has determined that there is no need for viewshed protection at this time because the property behind the Cathedral (City Hall and Plaza de Armas) is not developable. There was no consensus regarding the Tower Life building and it is not recommended at this time. In both of these cases, viewsheds could be pursued in the future through council action with only minimal UDC amendments.

ALTERNATIVES:

As an alternative, no additional zoning overlays for the previously-recommended sites would be considered. No UDC amendments would be necessary.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Costs associated with large-area rezonings and/or UDC amendments include legally-required notifications and publications. These costs are currently budgeted.

Professional services associated may be required to provide a survey and metes and bounds description for a new zoning overlay district. Consultant fees could range between \$5,000 and \$15,000.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the development of a zoning overlay district (such as RIO) with building design standards in proximity to Woodlawn Lake. No further action regarding potential viewsheds is recommended at this time.