



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:14-680

Agenda Item Number: 10.

Agenda Date: 4/3/2014

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Planning and Community Development

DEPARTMENT HEAD: John Dugan, AICP

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: 1 & small portions of 2 and 5

SUBJECT:

Downtown Design Guide

SUMMARY:

The 72 page Design Guide has been developed to assist the Historic and Design Review Committee (HDRC) assess the designs of non-historic infill building/redevelopment in Downtown San Antonio. Several Council adopted policy documents including the 2012 Center City Strategic Framework Implementation Plan recommend that the City develop design criteria for the future development of Downtown.

The adoption of the Design Guide requires amendments to the D (Downtown) Zoning District in the Unified Development Code (UDC) and to incorporate the Design Guide as an appendix within the UDC, as well as code amendments to clarify the terms Central Business District and Downtown Business District in Chapters 13, 16, and 22 of the City Code.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On July 22, 2012 the City Council adopted the Center City Strategic Framework Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan provides recommendations regarding implementation of the Downtown Strategic Framework Plan through increased public investment, creation of a housing finance strategy, coordinated management, and regulation of development.

As it pertains to regulation of development, the Implementation Plan recommended that the City implement a

new framework that regulates form, use, and density for public and private projects and enables a thorough urban design review of development projects. The Plan specifically recommended the City initiate the formulation of design guidelines for the Center City. Design guidelines are intended to provide a clear design framework for future development in the downtown and provide increased predictability regarding the development review process.

In a separate and distinct process, the Infill Development Task Force, tasked with reviewing infill development policy also recommended the preparation of design guidelines for Center City.

Based on these recommendations, CityDesignCenter, a unit of the Department of Planning and Community Development has completed the draft “Downtown Design Guide” following a lengthy input and review process involving architects, developers, real estate experts and City Departments including the City Attorney. The Guide was vetted through several meetings with the members of the Infill Development Task Force. The Guide has also been reviewed and commented on by the cities of Austin, Fort Worth and Dallas.

The adoption of the Design Guide requires an amendment to the D (Downtown) Zoning District in the Unified Development Code (UDC), as well as additional reference and clarification amendments to incorporate the Design Guide as an appendix within the UDC. The proposed Code amendments also clarify the terms Central Business District and Downtown Business District by amending Chapters 13, 16, 22, and 35 of the City Code. The design criteria in the Design Guide would be applicable to all properties zoned “D” (Downtown) except for historic properties and properties within a Historic District. Those properties are already covered by the recently adopted Historic Design Guidelines.

The City Council was previously briefed on this item during the November 20, 2013 “B” Session. Staff briefed the Historic and Design Review Committee on February 19, 2014 and Zoning Commission on March 4, 2014, with both bodies unanimously recommending approval.

ISSUE:

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ALTERNATIVES:

At this time there is no comprehensive framework to guide the design of future development downtown. Failure to adopt the Downtown Design Guide will continue to allow downtown development in an uncoordinated fashion.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact on this item.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning and Community Development Department recommends approval of the Downtown Design Guide and its associated Code amendments for incorporation of the Guide into the UDC.