



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:20-5984

Agenda Item Number: 4.

Agenda Date: 10/5/2020

In Control: Culture and Neighborhood Services Committee

DEPARTMENT: Office of Historic Preservation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Shanon Shea Miller, Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: All

SUBJECT: Briefing regarding proposed local historical markers programs

SUMMARY:

San Antonio's historical and cultural significance extends far beyond our historic architecture, well-known histories, and our designated landmarks. San Antonio is rich in stories that celebrate our built environment, diverse communities, and unique traditions. Following discussions with community partners focused on how to tell a more inclusive San Antonio story, the Office of Historic Preservation is launching two local markers programs to commemorate untold, undertold, and geographically diverse stories in a way that is accessible, affordable, and inclusive: *There's a Story Here*, a community-sourced story-sharing and mapping project tentatively slated to launch in October 2020, and *History Here*, a community-reviewed local markers program.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Since June 2020, OHP staff has worked with community leaders to develop the alternative markers program, a local effort not constrained by the traditional and more formal historical markers programs that currently exist at the state and national level. The working group for the alternative markers program includes stakeholders that broadly represent the population of San Antonio, such as the Westside Preservation Alliance, the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, SAAACAM, and the Conservation Society of San Antonio. The working group reviewed proposals by OHP staff and provided feedback to ensure that the alternative markers program meets the goals of the initiative. With the guidance of the working group, OHP staff proposes two alternative markers programs centered on community participation and community review and that champion San Antonio's undertold stories.

ISSUE:

Because the City of San Antonio currently does not have a local markers program, individuals and organizations who wish to commemorate a person, group, or event, typically apply for, pay for, and maintain public history markers through the Texas Historic Commission's subject marker program. A THC subject marker costs between \$1,100 and \$1,800, takes 12 to 15 months from application to completion, and requires a five- to seven- page annotated narrative about the subject. This amounts to an incredible amount of staff and/or volunteer time and funds, particularly for individuals or non-profit community organizations. While thorough and substantial historic research is valuable, particularly for the state subject marker program, this level of research paired with the application requirements and overall cost of the process is a deterrent for many applicants. This has resulted in a commemorative landscape in San Antonio that excludes many impactful histories. As proposed, the two alternative markers programs work to resolve these barriers.

There's a Story Here (TASH) is a story-sharing and mapping campaign focused on crowdsourcing stories about places that are special to San Antonians. This project seeks to celebrate fun, obscure, meaningful, and previously untold stories by highlighting locations tied to these stories with yard signs or stickers and public engagement. Members of the public can submit stories to the OHP Discovery Map and check a box indicating they want to participate in TASH to receive a sign or sticker. The story will appear on a location-enabled map accessible through a QR code or URL on the sticker or sign. Storytellers can include photos, video, news articles, and audio with their submission to help tell the story of the site, but these supplemental materials are not required. Because there is no research threshold, TASH allows the public to share a broad range of stories that do not require extensive research, allowing people to highlight stories tied to traditions, culture, oral histories, myths and legends, personal experiences, and popular culture.

TASH features two marker styles: 6"x9" chloroplast signs, appropriate for installation in yards or public rights-of-way, and 3"x6" vinyl stickers to be placed on buildings or structures with owner approval. Passersby can scan the QR code or navigate to the URL included on the marker, which will take them to the location-enabled map where they can learn about the nearest story as well as other TASH submissions nearby.

The History Here program prioritizes untold, undertold, and geographically diverse stories, substantiated by research, embedded community knowledge, oral traditions, and other nontraditional approaches to public history. At this level, members of the public will nominate a site for a History Here marker. The nomination will be reviewed by a Community Review Committee comprised of individuals and organizations committed to the preservation and celebration of San Antonio's built and cultural histories. Organizations our community partners suggested we include are the Westside Preservation Alliance, Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, Conservation Society of San Antonio, American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions, SAPL Texana & Genealogy, Pride San Antonio, AIA Historic Resources Committee, AIA SA Latinos in Architecture, National Organization of Minority Architects, faculty and student representatives from local colleges and universities in related fields, university and military archivists, religious organizations and archivists, and ecologists/environmental historians.

The community review process will be qualitative, rather than quantitative; therefore, the Community Review Committee will not review nominations with predetermined criteria but will assess each nomination on a case-by-case basis for local significance. The nominator will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit the application following Community Review Committee feedback. Once a nomination has been approved, OHP staff will add the marker location to the location-enabled map, where it will be accessible to the public.

The markers proposed for the History Here program are 18"x24" weather-graded metallic plastic that cost approximately \$150 each. They will include the title of the program, the site name and address, two or three sentences explaining the significance of the site in English and in Spanish, a QR code and link to additional site information, and the Office of Historic Preservation logo. In an effort to make this program affordable and accessible, OHP will accept donations from the TASH markers to offset the cost of the History Here markers and will charge approximately \$200 to \$250 per History Here sign in order to create a self-sustaining program and to fund markers for nominations that would otherwise be deterred by the cost. Nominators are also encouraged to find sponsors for their History Here marker; there is room on the marker to include sponsorship information.

Key anticipated outcomes from the implementation of the alternative markers program include:

- A more inclusive local commemorative landscape;
- Public engagement in the built environment and in the telling of San Antonio history;
- Promotion of the City's cultural heritage and diverse population through lesser known stories;
- Increased availability, accessibility, and affordability in commemorating significant City sites;
- Inclusion of new participants in sharing and learning about San Antonio's past, including those traditionally excluded; and
- Promotion of sites of local significance through heavy social media presence.

The Office of Historic Preservation has taken several steps to ensure that these marker programs are successful and will address the longstanding issues that community members have experienced in seeking to commemorate people, groups, events, and places in San Antonio.

ALTERNATIVES: This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT: This item is for briefing purposes only. The review and recommendation of draft policy components bears no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION: This item is for briefing purposes only.

there's a
story
here



Learn more about this place or
submit your own story at
SApreservation.com/tash



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Proposed marker for There's a Story Here (actual size)

HISTORY HERE

RINCONCITO DE ESPERANZA HISTORIC DISTRICT

816 S Colorado Street

Designated in August 2020, the Rinconcito de Esperanza Historic District is the first local historic district on San Antonio's historic Westside. The structures retain their historic footprints and embody the density, architectural styles, and vernacular forms once seen throughout the neighborhood. The site is also home to past and present businesses and organizations that have served neighbors since the 1920s.

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Want to hear more about this site or learn about the
Office of Historic Preservation's HISTORY HERE Project?
Scan the QR code or visit ScoutSA.com

[SPANISH TRANSLATION OF TEXT ABOVE]
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Proposed History Here marker, 18"x24" when installed.