



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**15-5350

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**Agenda Item Number:** 14.

**Agenda Date:** 10/22/2015

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** San Antonio Police Department

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** William P. McManus, Chief of Police

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** City-wide

**SUBJECT:**

The creation of "Safe Exchange Zones at Police Substations to help citizens safely broker transactions with strangers."

**SUMMARY:**

At the request of City Councilman Gallagher the San Antonio Police Department has explored the feasibility of establishing "Safe Exchange Zones at Police Substations to help citizens safely broker transactions with strangers

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The exchange of commerce of legitimate items among individuals has evolved over the years. With the rising popularity of internet commerce, individuals are often put in a position of selling or purchasing their items from strangers who may or may not have good intentions.

The direct commercial exchanges between private individuals have become common place due to the popularity of online website such as Craigslist.com. While the vast majority of these exchanges are legitimate and safe, some individuals have used online exchange websites and mobile applications to victimize potential buyers and/or sellers. In order to provide a safe atmosphere in which to make these exchanges, several police departments across the nation have allowed buyers and sellers to meet in the parking lot and/or lobby of their police stations to carry out the exchange. Although no major Texas cities actively promote safe zones for commercial exchanges most do allow the practice.

The SAPD has six substations across the City, open 24 hours, 7 days a week. The parking lot and the lobby of each substation are covered by video surveillance. Currently, the public is allowed access to the parking lot and the lobby and safe child exchanges are regularly carried out there. By utilizing instructional outreach and safety information as well as training for SAPD officers and service agents, residents will be encouraged to conduct exchanges in safe locations such as police substation lobbies and parking lots. Also, the Department

will utilize social media to provide safety tips when conducting these types of transactions. Safety tips will include such things as insisting that an individual meet at a public place, such as one of the SAPD safe exchange zones at every substation, don't go alone, trust your instincts, do not meet in a secluded area, and do not invite strangers into your home, and do not go to theirs.

**ISSUE:**

In the interest of public safety, the creation of safe exchange zones will allow the residents of San Antonio to feel there is a secure place to conduct exchanges without fear of any harm to the sellers or buyers.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The alternative would be to not create the Safe Exchange Zones and allow such exchanges to go on without the safety and security that Safe Exchange Zones could provide.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the creation of Safe Exchange Zones.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The SAPD recommends that the City Council approve the creation of Safe Exchange Zones at the Police Substations.