



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Urban Transportation Commission  
Joana Perez, Commission Liaison

**FROM:** Robert Spillar, P.E., Director  
Austin Transportation Department

**DATE:** March 16, 2015

**SUBJECT:** **CIUR 1517 – Relating to Downtown Alley Naming**

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This briefing memo is being provided to the Commission as a courtesy to provide information regarding Council Item Update Report (CIUR) 1517. At their December 11, 2014 meeting, City Council passed Resolution 20141211-124 that directed the City Manager to solicit the feedback of the Downtown Commission and other stakeholders for a naming convention or naming process for the downtown alleyway grid. CIUR 1517 was directed to the Austin Transportation Department (ATD) as the lead. The following actions have been taken in response:

- February 18, 2015, the Downtown Commission formed a working group to address the Resolution.
- February 19, 2015, ATD met with various City of Austin department representatives to discuss the naming convention currently used for identification of alleys within the departments.
- March 05, 2015, ATD staff met with the Downtown Commission Alley Naming Working Group.
- March 06, 2015, ATD staff attended the Downtown Alley Workgroup meeting to provide an update on the Resolution.

Based on the feedback received ATD recommends the following:

1. Code Amendment - Code of Ordinances 12-1-1 defines Alley to mean a street of 20 feet or less in width, having no legal or official name other than alley. In all of the above meetings it was agreed that there is not a need to publicly name all, about 100, existing alleys within the downtown grid (Attachment A). Naming those downtown alleys that are confirmed for activation as public space would add more meaning to the activated spaces and control visual clutter downtown by mindfully selecting the type of signage used to identify the activated downtown alleys. The code must be amended to allow for the naming of alleys. It is recommended that this code definition be updated to define Alley to mean a street of 20 feet or less in width, having no legal or official name other than alley, except when an alley has been confirmed for activation within the downtown boundary.
2. Naming Convention – The City of Austin has internally used the same naming convention for alleys since prior to 1967. In 1984, the City Manager confirmed the internal naming convention for the purpose of making entries into the Traffic Register (Attachment B). Under the internal naming convention alleys are identified as follows:
  - a. North-south Alleys are named for the nearest parallel street to its west.
  - b. East-west Alleys are named for the nearest parallel street to its south.

In December 2014, Austin Transportation Department, Public Works Department, and Communications Technology Management Department agreed to use this naming convention in

the management of assets maintained in the City's Enterprise databases (Attachment C). Those attending the above noted meetings agreed with the recommendation to use the same naming convention outlined above when publicly naming a downtown alley that has been confirmed for activation. ATD should be notified as a part of the alley activation process to coordinate the naming of the alley and any temporary or permanent signage. No council action would be required to apply the alley name as defined in the naming convention.

3. Honorary Downtown Alley Name Designations-Many stakeholders expressed concern that the downtown alley names per the naming convention may not appeal to the character or history of certain alley activation projects. Therefore, the concept of honorary downtown alley name designations was presented as a way to maintain the applied legal name, per the naming convention, while providing Property Owners, City Council, and/or City Departments with a way to:
  - a. honor a person, place, institution, group, entity, or historical event; or
  - b. enhance a neighborhood through the association of alley name with its location, area characteristics, and history.

Those attending the above noted meetings agreed that an honorary naming process would meet the objective. It is recommended that the honorary downtown alley name designations only apply to alleys that have been confirmed for activation within downtown. The honorary process is expected to include an application and fee submittal to the City. ATD would then process the request by setting the item for Council Action and notifying affected property owners, agencies and City Departments of the Council date. It is expected that the applicant would pay for the sign replacement and ATD would coordinate any temporary or permanent signage as a part of the honorary process.

Please contact Cari Buetow at 512-974-6368 if there are questions or if your Commission would like a presentation, ATD would be happy to attend your next meeting and participate in the discussion.

cc: Robert Goode, P.E., Assistant City Manager  
Gordon Derr, Assistant Director, Austin Transportation Department  
Cari Buetow, Program Coordinator, Austin Transportation Department