

## Item 27



# Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

**Meeting Date:** March 5, 2013

**Prepared By/Phone Number:** Vicki Skinner/854-9522

**Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head:** Rosemary Lehmborg, District Attorney

**Commissioners Court Sponsor:** Judge Bischoe

*Vicki Skinner for Rosemary Lehmborg*

### **AGENDA LANGUAGE:**

Consider and take appropriate action on acceptance of a donation of \$10,000 from the Downtown Austin Alliance for the District Attorney's Office.

### **BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:**

The District Attorney's Office requests approval to accept a \$10,000 donation from the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA). The DAA is presenting this donation to assist the District Attorney's Office in continuing the assignment of a full-time Assistant District Attorney position to the downtown area.

Since January, 2002 an Assistant District Attorney (ADA) has been dedicated to working on cases relating to violent crime, career criminals, narcotics and nuisance abatement matters in Austin's Downtown Business District. This ADA works closely with the Austin Police Department Downtown Area Command, the Downtown Crime Advisory Board and the downtown community to eliminate the illegal activity of known criminals, activities associated with the sale and distribution of narcotics, firearm violations, nuisance activities from downtown properties and other serious criminal offenses that endanger citizens and harm the quality of life downtown.

The continuing donations from the Downtown Austin Alliance, as well as the funding provided through an interlocal agreement with the City of Austin, have assisted in enabling the District Attorney's Office to dedicate an Assistant District Attorney to this cooperative program. The donations and interlocal funds are used to hire temporary staff to assist in covering the other responsibilities of the position.

**AGENDA REQUEST DEADLINE:** All agenda requests and supporting materials must be submitted as a pdf to Cheryl Aker in the County Judge's office, [Cheryl.Aker@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:Cheryl.Aker@co.travis.tx.us) by **Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.** for the next week's meeting.

We appreciate the donation of the Downtown Austin Alliance and look forward to the ongoing success of this community-based, multi-organizational approach to eliminating crime in the Downtown Business District.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The staff recommends approval.

**ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

N/A

**FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

The \$10,000 donation from the Downtown Austin Alliance will be used to hire temporary staff.

**REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:**

N/A

**AGENDA REQUEST DEADLINE:** All agenda requests and supporting materials must be submitted as a pdf to Cheryl Aker in the County Judge's office, [Cheryl.Aker@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:Cheryl.Aker@co.travis.tx.us) by **Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.** for the next week's meeting.



## Rosemary Lehmborg ★ Travis County District Attorney

P.O. Box 1748 Austin, Texas 78767 • Telephone: 512-854-9400 • Fax: 512-854-9695

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Travis County Judge and Commissioners

**FROM:** Vicki Skinner, District Attorney's Office *Vicki Skinner for Rosemary Lehmborg*

**DATE:** February 26, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Donation from Downtown Austin Alliance

The District Attorney's Office requests approval to accept a \$10,000 donation from the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA). The DAA is presenting this donation to assist the District Attorney's Office in continuing the assignment of a full-time Assistant District Attorney position to the downtown area.

Since January, 2002 an Assistant District Attorney has been dedicated to working on cases relating to violent crime, career criminals, narcotics and nuisance abatement matters in Austin's Downtown Business District. This Attorney works closely with the Austin Police Department Downtown Area Command, the Downtown Crime Advisory Board and the downtown community to eliminate the illegal activity of known criminals, activities associated with the sale and distribution of narcotics, firearm violations, nuisance activities from downtown properties and other serious criminal offenses that endanger citizens and harm the quality of life downtown.

The donations from the Downtown Austin Alliance, as well as the funding provided through an interlocal agreement with the City of Austin, have allowed the District Attorney's Office to continue dedicating an Assistant District Attorney to this cooperative program. The donations and interlocal funds are used to hire temporary staff to assist in covering the permanent responsibilities of the position.

We appreciate this donation from the Downtown Austin Alliance and look forward to the ongoing success of this community-based, multi-organizational approach to eliminating crime in the Downtown Business District.

cc: David Jungerman, Auditor's Office  
Katie Petersen, Planning and Budget Office  
Jim Connolly, County Attorney's office

## **Downtown Neighborhood District Attorney Initiative Travis County District Attorney's Office**

**Update  
August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

*"Community prosecution focuses on targeted areas that involve a long-term, proactive partnership among the prosecutor's office, law enforcement, the community and public and private organizations, whereby the authority of the prosecutor's office is used to solve problems, improve public safety and enhance the quality of life."*

American Prosecutors Research Institute

### **History/Goals of the Downtown Neighborhood DA Initiative:**

The Travis County District Attorney's (TCDA) Downtown Neighborhood District Attorney Initiative (Downtown NDA) began in January 2002 with a Community Prosecution Leadership grant through the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance. The goals of the project include to:

- Enhance the quality of life;
- Reduce crime;
- Enhance criminal justice processes;
- Partner with community stakeholders; and
- Enhance offender reentry processes in the downtown community.

The role of the Downtown NDA includes activities such as:

- developing opportunities to create partnerships with criminal justice and community stakeholders that will lead to enhancing the safety and quality of life downtown;
- providing assistance in development of effective investigative and search and arrest processes that lead to court-ready cases being filed;
- working with key stakeholders on development of strategies that impact safety and quality of life downtown; and
- serving as a link to trial courts to effectively communicate issues to prosecutors that impact the downtown community and leads to effective dispositions of cases.

Since 2003, the Downtown NDA program has been a public-private collaboration that includes funding from Travis County, City of Austin and the Downtown Austin Alliance. The donations from the Downtown Austin Alliance and the funding provided through an interlocal agreement with the City of Austin have allowed the District Attorney's Office to continue dedicating an Assistant District Attorney (ADA) to this cooperative program. The donations and interlocal funds are used to hire temporary staff to assist in covering the other responsibilities of the ADA position.

In February of 2010, Travis County Assistant District Attorney Jason English was assigned as the Downtown Neighborhood District Attorney. Other key TCDA staff that participate in various programs and initiatives connected to the Downtown NDA program include: John Neal (TCDA First Assistant District Attorney), Dayna Blazey (Director of TCDA Strategic Prosecution Division), Buddy Meyer (Director of TCDA Trial Bureau), Robert Smith (Director of TCDA Courts Division) and Darla Gay (TCDA Planning Manager for Community Justice Programs).

## **Downtown Crime Trends:**

The geographical area covered by the Downtown NDA is the Austin Police Department's Downtown Area Command. In January of 2011, the Austin Police Department readjusted/reorganized their police sector boundaries and the boundaries for the Downtown Area Command policing sector (George Sector) were changed. The new boundary lines are: **South**---Town Lake, **North**---12<sup>th</sup> Street (west of IH 35) and 11<sup>th</sup> Street (east of IH 35, **West**---Lamar Blvd, and **East**---Chicon). As of August 9, 2012, the Austin Police Department reported:

- **City-wide:**
  - Violent crime is down 3% from last year, and property crime is up 1%.
- **George Sector:**
  - Violent crime is up 13% from last year, and property crime is up 5%.

## **Downtown NDA Highlighted Initiatives FY2012 as of 08-30-12:**

During FY 2012, there were several key initiatives that were launched or continued within the Downtown NDA program, the most notable is the initiative for downtown:

### **Downtown Crime Initiative (May 2011 - Aug. 2012)**

**Goal:** To improve the quality of life, enjoyment and safety of residents, businesses and visitors to the downtown entertainment area by reduction of drug, violent and public disorder crimes by coordinated, enhanced enforcement, prosecution and communication between the Austin Police Department (APD), Travis County District Attorney's office (TCDA) and residents, businesses and visitors to the area.

#### **Activities:**

- Created program/screening criteria:
  - Targeted Felony Offenses: Over 60 felony offenses are included in a list of target cases including offenses related to Part I violent crimes and property crimes as well as Part II offenses including narcotic, prostitution, and weapons-related offenses. In addition the targeted offenses include resisting/evading arrest, retaliation as well as those dealing with tampering with evidence.
  - Geographic Area of Offense: **North**---10<sup>th</sup> Street, **South**---Cesar Chavez, **East**---Comal Street, and **West**--North Lamar to Comal Street
  - TCDA NDA will review offense reports referred to our office and make appropriate punishment recommendations on cases (and the NDA may adopt specific cases for personal prosecution).
  - Felony drug offenses to be included in special prosecution initiative will be reviewed by APD and the NDA and factors to be taken in consideration for

inclusion in the program include: prior arrest and criminal history, connection to drug dealing, occurrence on street in drug dealing area, quantity of drug, and whether the defendant is a known offender in downtown area.

- Held five planning meetings and with key stakeholders.
- Engaged partners in development of the program including: Austin Police Department, Crime Records Unit of Austin Police Department, Travis County DA's Trial Court Division and Records Division.
- Developed process for tracking cases within the DA's Office in order to monitor outcomes and assess dispositions.

### **Results/Impact (May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011- August 21, 2012):**

- A total of 666 cases have been reviewed and 414 cases accepted for the program.
- 252 cases of the reviewed were rejected for the program with 60% of those cases not meeting criteria for inclusion and 25% for not being within the target area.
- 242 cases have been disposed as of August 21, 2012:
  - 20% resulted in a sentence to TDCJ-Prison and 27% to TDCJ-State Jail facility (47% to TDCJ total).
  - 23% resulted in a sentence to Community Supervision, with 12% sentenced to the County Jail and dismissing 12% either outright or pursuant to a plea bargain on another case.

### **News Articles Relating to Downtown District Attorney Initiative— Oct. 2011-August 2012:**

December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011:

#### **New program targets repeat offenders downtown**

**With downtown becoming more residential, prosecutors, neighbors and police team up to reduce crime.**

[http://www.statesman.com/news/local/new-program-targets-repeat-offenders-downtown-2064212.html?cxtype=rss\\_ece\\_frontpage](http://www.statesman.com/news/local/new-program-targets-repeat-offenders-downtown-2064212.html?cxtype=rss_ece_frontpage)

March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012:

#### **East Austin neighborhoods want downtown-style safety measures**

[http://www.statesman.com/news/local/east-austin-neighborhoods-want-downtown-style-safety-measures-2273101.html?cxtype=rss\\_ece\\_frontpage](http://www.statesman.com/news/local/east-austin-neighborhoods-want-downtown-style-safety-measures-2273101.html?cxtype=rss_ece_frontpage)

August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012:

#### **Anti-drug program — successful in other cities — facing doubters in East Austin**

[http://www.statesman.com/news/local/anti-drug-program-successful-in-other-cities-facing-2438000.html?cxtype=rss\\_ece\\_frontpage](http://www.statesman.com/news/local/anti-drug-program-successful-in-other-cities-facing-2438000.html?cxtype=rss_ece_frontpage)

July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012:

#### **Working 'The Corner': Neighbors and officials plan one more effort to save the neighborhood around 12th and Chicon**

<http://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2012-07-13/working-the-corner/print/>

August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012:

#### **WWGD?: APD and TCDA to Pursue Innovative Approach to Drug Enforcement in East Austin**

<http://gritsforbreakfast.blogspot.com/2012/08/wwgd-apd-and-tcda-to-pursue-innovative.html>

November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011:

**Accused tire slasher gets 10 years in prison**

[http://www.statesman.com/news/local/accused-tire-slasher-gets-10-years-in-prison-1959888.html?cxtype=rss\\_ece\\_frontpage](http://www.statesman.com/news/local/accused-tire-slasher-gets-10-years-in-prison-1959888.html?cxtype=rss_ece_frontpage)

**For additional information about the Travis County District Attorney's Office  
Downtown Neighborhood District Attorney Program:**

**Jason English**  
**[Jason.english@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:Jason.english@co.travis.tx.us)**  
**512-974-5257**