



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES



TO: Development Services Customers

SUBJECT: **INFORMATION BULLETIN 112**
Temporary Use - Certificate of Occupancy and Application

DATE: January 31, 2006, Revised: April 21, 2017/ December 21, 2018/ March 25, 2022/
April 2025

CREATED BY: Plan Review Division

Purpose:

As a customer service initiative, the Development Services Department (DSD) has revised the bulletin to assist customers and staff when permitting temporary uses for tents, membrane structures, circuses, carnivals, and temporary special event structures. In addition, this IB outlines the requirements and steps necessary to erect and legally use tents, circuses, carnivals, and other temporary event structures in the City of San Antonio. This bulletin has been updated to the correct link for the electronic on-line BuildSA application process.

Scope:

DSD requires that special events and structures erected for temporary uses comply with [Section 35-391 of the Unified Development Code](#) (UDC) as well as the International Building Code (IBC). The San Antonio Fire Department requires that tents, stages, membrane structures, and other temporary special event structures of temporary use also comply with Chapter 31 of the *International Fire Code (IFC)* and City amendments to the latest adopted versions of *International Fire Code* – [Chapter 11 City Ordinances](#). All temporary uses shall comply with the noise limitations set out in Chapter 21 of the City Code.

The UDC provides for maximum time limits for special events and structures used in special events depending on the use and varies from 7-days to 45-days.

Tents and membrane structures over 180-days also comply with the IFC and the IBC, but are not considered temporary by definition and are not a part of this Information Bulletin.

Tents and Special Events

A Special Event may be applied for with Development Services (the list indicated below). Tent(s) may be included with a special event permit, and within the application, the number and size of tent(s) to be used would be indicated. Alternatively, a special event without a tent, or a tent outside a special event may be applied for within the same application.

“Tents” are defined by the IFC as a structure, enclosure, umbrella structure or shelter, with or without sidewalls or drops, constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner except by air or the contents that it protects, while a “membrane structure” is defined as an air-inflated, air-supported, cable or frame-covered structure. The customer is required to submit proposed occupant loads based on the layout, square footage, and use of the temporary structure.

Section 3103 of Chapter 11 City Fire Code Amendments requires applicants to apply for Certificate of Occupancy for tents and membrane structures having an occupant load over 50 (equates to a tent of 750-square feet for assembly purposes and all other occupancies having an area in excess of 1200 square feet) require additional design review. Any assembly use tent with an occupant load over 50 occupants will require a Texas Professional Engineer to verify the structural stability and submit verification at time of permitting. Assembly occupancies include any type of use where people gather under the tent or within the membrane structure to eat, or drink, to listen to lectures, concerts, movies, to worship/religious events, to watch or participate in sports or recreation, or any other type of similar gatherings.

Tents exceeding one story in height and any tent or membrane structure meant to be occupied or erected over 180-days, shall be permitted by submitting an application through the on-line [BuildSA ACA Customer Portal](#) and by applying for a Commercial Project Application. These tent installation proposals shall comply with the design sections (1606 through 1609) of the International Building Code and must be evaluated by a Texas Professional Engineer. The design professional shall also provide an inspection letter confirming installation procedures have been followed per their recommended guidelines.

Application

Prior to erecting a tent and/or a special event, applicants must apply for the permit through the [BuildSA ACA Customer Portal](#). Once logged in, click on the Building tab, then click on “Create an Application”. Application for a tent or special event is within the “Certificate of Occupancy Application”. While filling out the on-line application, choose “COO Temporary Use/Tent – Special Event”.

Within the application, subcategories of Temporary Use/Tents or Special Events are:

- Circus
- Carnival
- Christmas Tree Sales
- Religious Meeting
- Oversized Vehicle
- Construction Office/Shed (on a separate lot than the lot of construction)
- Other

For tents, membrane structures, and/or special events that do not fall into the first four special events categories, choose “Other” and describe the use of the tent or the special event. The use of “Other” allows a Certificate of Occupancy for up to 30-days (with review for zoning appropriateness).

The fee will be the \$100 Certificate of Occupancy fee (plus surcharge fees). After the application is submitted there is a City Review prior to a permit being issued.

Tents - Unified Development Code Requirements

- Tents associated with religious meetings may be permitted in nonresidential districts for a maximum of 30 days and may operate between the hours of 8am-10pm.
- Tents associated with Christmas Tree sales may be permitted in nonresidential districts for a maximum and not to exceed 45 days.
- Tents associated with circuses or carnivals, may be permitted in nonresidential districts for a maximum of two weeks and may operate between the hours of 9am-10pm. Tents shall not be located within 500 feet of property used for residential purposes. The site shall be a minimum of one acre and shall be an “all weather surface” consisting of poured concrete, laid asphalt, tile/brick/flagstone/concrete block, compacted base material, crushed granite, or gravel. Restrooms shall be provided at a ratio of 1 to every 50 occupants.
- Tents associated with special events including but limited to retail sales, fairs, clinics, receptions, dinners, (etc.) may be permitted for a maximum period not to exceed seven days.

Circuses and Carnivals

- Circuses and carnivals without tents shall not be located within 500 feet of property used for residential purposes. Events may be permitted for maximum of two weeks and may operate between the hours of 9am-10pm. Equipment, rides, and other mechanical equipment shall not be located within 500 feet of property used for residential purposes. The site shall be a minimum of one acre and shall be an “all weather surface” consisting of poured concrete, laid asphalt, tile/brick/flagstone/concrete block/ compacted base material, crushed granite, or gravel. Restrooms shall be provided at a ratio of 1 to every 50 occupants.
- Prior to setting any equipment, rides, tents or other temporary structures, applicants must apply for Certificate Occupancy through the BuildSA ACA Customer Portal.

Document Submittal

During the on-line application, submittal of electronic documents (pdf format) may be uploaded. Documents are required and the review of the application is not possible without the documents. Documents include:

- A Site Plan (may be Google Earth or similar aerial site plan) showing where the tent, equipment, rides, and other structures will be located as it relates to property lines, structures, and surrounding residential use zones. (See included step by step attachment). The aerial map shall include dimensioned measurements confirming appropriate lots sizes and minimum separation requirements to residential use property lines. Measurements shall be taken from the tents, equipment, rides, or other structures to surrounding residential property lines (including apartments). A professional survey is not required but may be submitted by the customer.
- For any tent over 750 square feet (assembly use), or over 1,200 square feet (other uses such as office or retail), submit a floor plan showing seating and exiting from the tent.
- For large tents, a fire lane may be required and therefore a fire protection site plan may be asked for during the review. Other items specified in the IFC may be required on a case-by-case basis.

Inspections

Inspections will be scheduled after tents and equipment have been erected and are ready for inspection. Applicable inspections will include Building, Electrical, Fire and Health (if applicable). Approval by all applicable inspections is required prior to the use of all tents and equipment. Open air canopies will not require a fire inspection. Fire inspections shall be scheduled directly with the San Antonio Fire Department by calling 207-8410.

Inspection Items

- Use of any temporary structure as defined in [Section 35-391 of the Unified Development Code \(UDC\)](#) shall be prohibited unless the Building Official has issued full inspection approvals.
- Tent location to comply with Chapter 31, section 3103.8.2 of the *International Fire Code* (For the purpose of determining required distances, support ropes and guy wires shall be considered part of the tent, canopy, or membrane structure). Adequately roped, braced, and anchored
- Occupant load
- Tent shall be fire retardant. IFC Section 3104
- Minimum number of means of egress and means of egress widths based on occupancy load
- Location of exits and exit signs, enclosed tents will also require battery operated exit signage and emergency lighting.
- Seating arrangements, passageways, and aisle arrangements
- Temporary electrical wiring and/or power generators. Temporary electrical wiring and/or power generators must comply with the *National Electrical Code*.
- Fire extinguishers are to be type 2a:10b:c
- Smoking and propane heaters shall not be permitted in tents, canopies, or membrane structures.
- Tents or membrane structures shall not be located within 20 feet of lot lines, buildings, other tents or membrane structures, parked vehicles, or internal combustion engines. To determine required distances, support ropes and guy wires shall be considered as part of the temporary membrane structure or tent.

House Keeping

Weeds and flammable vegetation shall be removed to within 30 feet. Hay, straw, trash, and other flammable material must be stored 30 feet from tent or membrane structure. Floor surface- inside and the grounds adjacent to and within 30 feet shall be kept free and clear of combustible waste

After-hours inspections: Inspections requested after normal business hours will be assessed an additional after-hours inspection fee of \$100 per discipline for Building and Electrical. Fire inspection fees will be assessed at a rate of \$80.00 per hour with a two-hour minimum plus a 3%.

After-hour inspections must be coordinated with Inspection Supervisors by calling (210) 207- 8314 and the San Antonio Fire Department (210)207-8410.

Standby personnel: When, in the opinion of the Chief Fire Marshal, it is essential for public safety in a tent, canopy or membrane structure used as a place of assembly or any other use where people congregate, because of the number of persons, or the nature of the performance, exhibition, display, contest or activity,

the owner, agent or lessee shall employ one or more qualified persons, as required and approved, to remain on duty during the times such places are open to the public, or when such activity is being conducted.

Temporary Special Event Structures

“Temporary special event structures” are defined by the IFC as *any temporary ground supported structure, platform, stage, stage scaffolding, or rigging, canopy tower support audio or visual effects equipment or similar structures not regulated within the scope of the International Building Code*. Special Event Structures are applied for using the [BuildSA ACA Customer Portal](#) and applying for a Commercial Project Application. Section 3105 of the International Fire Code requires that stages and other temporary special event structures over 400 square feet be permitted. Temporary special event structures over 400 square feet shall be submitted with construction drawings and structural analysis signed and sealed by a Texas Professional Engineer. Before any temporary special event structure is utilized or occupied, the applicant shall submit a final inspection report to the Building Official from a Texas Professional Engineer indicating that the installation of the temporary special event structures was installed in accordance with the construction documents.

Summary

This Information Bulletin is for informational purposes only.

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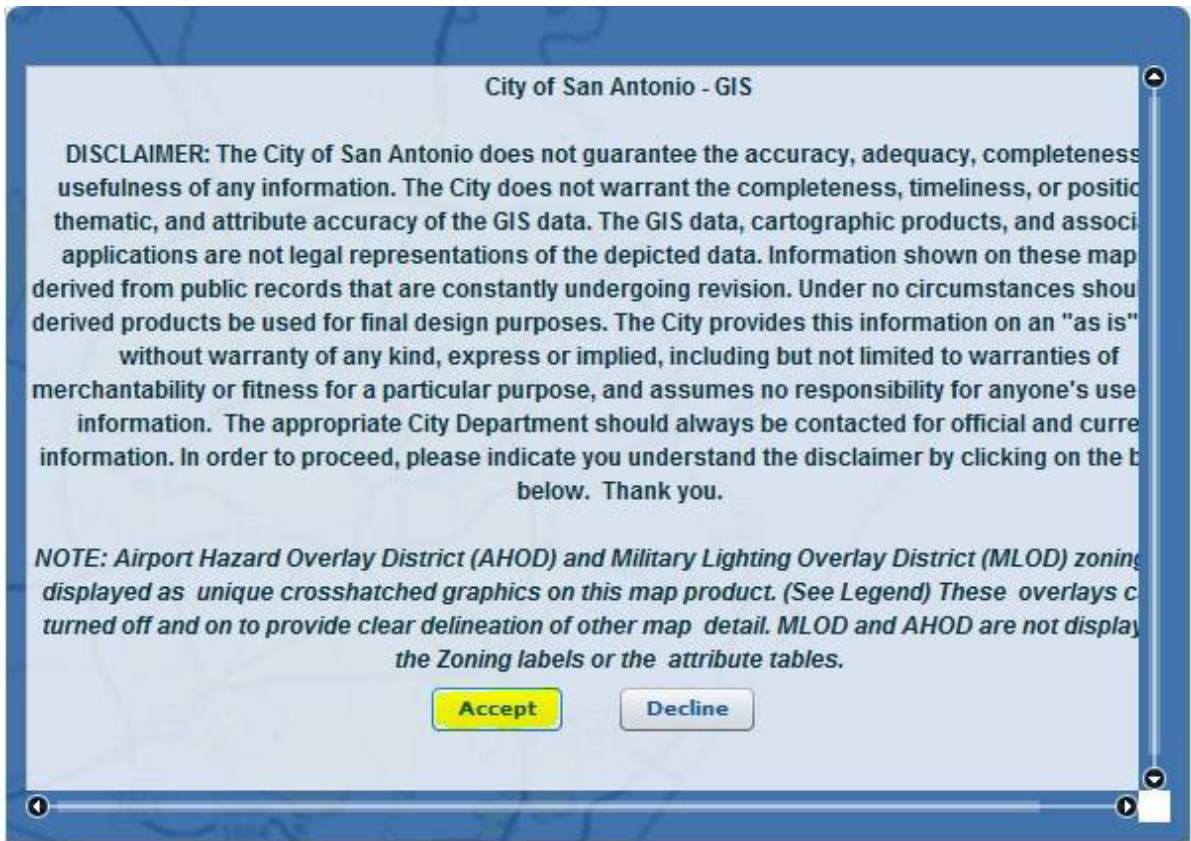
To Determine Distance Requirements in Accordance with UDC SEC 35-391- Temporary Uses (b):

Step 1: Visit the DSD Website at www.sanantonio.gov/dsd

Step 2: Click on the one stop-stop zoning map icon under the quick links section.




1. Click on Accept to agree to the terms




Use top menu to navigate the map.




Click the  icon and enter the property address or intersection. Do not enter directions (N, S, E, W). GIS will list options matching number and street name/ intersection. To enter an address:

- Type the street numbers
- Type the street name

2. Click **Locate**. GIS will find the address/intersection or return a message of “No matching locations found.”


- If no matching locations are found, click on  at top of Locate Address window
- Click **Clear**
- Check spelling and/or number then re-enter information.
- Click **Locate**

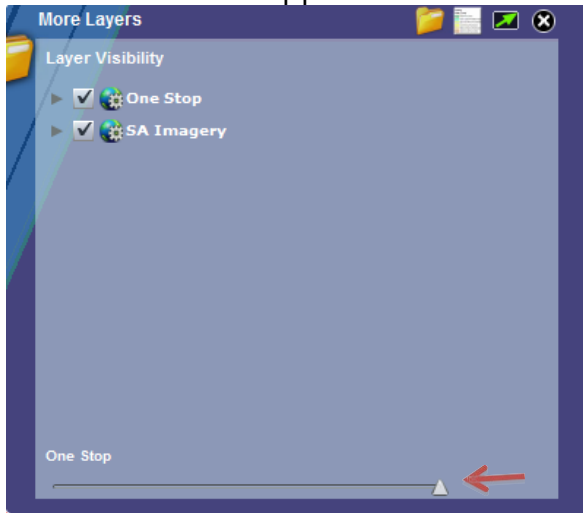
The mailbox will appear in the street, hold down the mouse to activate the  icon to locate the property address.

The zoom tool bar as shown below, located on the left of the screen can also be used to zoom in and out to provide a better overview.






3. Once address has been located, click on the  icon.
A new box will appear labeled More Layers:



- Click on SA Imagery
- Click on the triangle and drag to the left to activate the satellite view

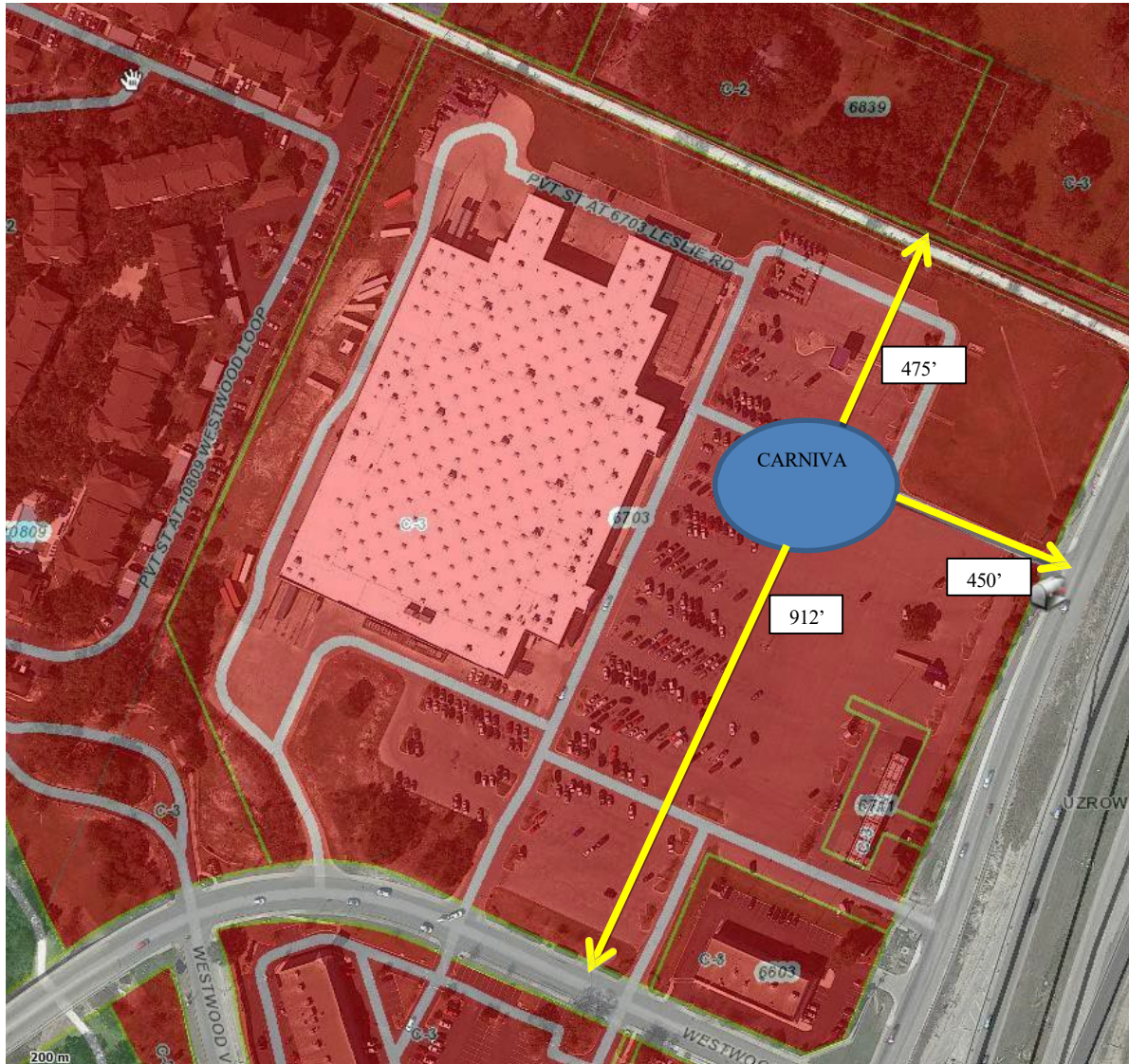
4. Once you have the aerial view, click the printer icon  and select the print option you prefer (portrait or landscape).



5. Draw in the structure, tent, equipment, or mechanical ride in relation to any surrounding residential use properties, including apartments.

These residential uses are typically labeled as "R" or "MF"

The illustration below depicts a compliant location. The carnival is located within the blue circle and the arrows illustrate the distance from the carnival to the property lines. In this illustration there are no residential uses within 500 feet.



The illustration below depicts a **NON-COMPLIANT** location. The carnival is located within the blue circle and the arrows illustrate the distance from the carnival to the property lines. In this illustration there **are** residential uses within 500 feet.

