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News, Issues & Events from City of San Antonio Downtown Operations
January 2008

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Mark Your Calendar

January 13
Paseo del Rio Mud Festival
info: 227-4262 or [Website](#)

January 26

Out & About Downtown

by Paula X. Stallcup, Director, Downtown Operations



Welcome! With 20 million visitors annually and more than 3,200 downtown residents, the heart of San Antonio requires coordination of a broad range of services, including parking, special events, sanitation and so much more.

To create a one-stop shop for centralized services and support for the downtown area, the City Manager reorganized various departments and functions into the new Downtown Operations Department. It's my commitment to you that if we can't answer your question, we will help you find the right resource that can.

Our team is here to maintain and improve downtown San Antonio's unique history and culture, and we are committed to serving the needs of downtown businesses, residents and stakeholders. To help keep you better informed of issues relating to downtown, this monthly newsletter will cover policy issues, upcoming events, improvements that have been implemented and other initiatives that are of interest to you.

We're always interested in your comments. So please call us if you have feedback, questions or need additional information. All of us here at Downtown Operations look forward to hearing from you.

We're located at 202 E. Nueva. Contact us at (210) 207-3677 or via email at downtown@sanantonio.gov for questions or assistance related to downtown San Antonio.

Heralding in The New Year: A Spirited Tradition

by Tonya Drake, Special Projects Manager



Celebrate San Antonio - our city's immensely popular New Year's Eve celebration - took on special significance this year as it also kicked off a

Houston Street Fair & Market

[Website](#)**February 3**

Mardi Gras River Parade

info: 227-4262 or

[Website](#)**February 23**

Houston Street Fair

info: 207-7258 or

[Website](#)**March 15**

Luminaria Arts Night in San Antonio

[Website](#)**March 29**

Houston Street Fair

info: 207-7258 or

[Website](#)**April 4 - 7**NCAA 2008 [Final Four](#)NCAA: [The Big Dance](#)**April 6**HemisFair 40th
Anniversary Celebration

info: 207-3677

Downtown San Antonio Among World's Top New Year's Locales

San Antonio earned a spot as one of the world's top 20 party destinations for New Year's, coming out ahead of such high profile destinations as London, Paris and Toronto. Las Vegas, New York, New Orleans, Orlando and San Francisco grabbed the top five party spots for New Year's Eve travelers. The rankings were compiled by Priceline.com, an online travel company based in Norwalk, Connecticut.

Driving Downtown? Need to Know Where to Park?

There are 6,472 public parking spaces downtown in surface lots and multi-level garages managed by the City, plus 2,000 regular parking meters and 60 event meters for Alamodome events. [Click here](#) to view maps of downtown parking lots and garages with rates, schedules

year-long celebration of HemisFair's 40th anniversary.

Beginning at 6:00 p.m. and ending 30 minutes past midnight, our Big Bash is always the first event of the New Year. The huge fiesta, held on South Alamo Street and throughout historic La Villita, featured great San Antonio cuisine, games, rides and entertainment for the whole family.

The crowd of more than 225,000 enjoyed Urban 15's Carnaval de San Anto along with soul, salsa, classic rock, international rhythms and dancing all night long. Families visited the H-E-B Family Stage at the Arneson River Theatre for carnival games and rides in the children's area. Operation Tribute to Freedom honored area soldiers returning from the Middle East. Everyone greeted the arrival of 2008 with a spectacular, 17-minute-long fireworks extravaganza.

Despite the large crowds, this lively tradition - the largest free New Year's Eve festival in Texas - is cleaned up within hours of the last fireworks. Celebrate San Antonio is produced by the San Antonio Parks Foundation, the City of San Antonio's Department of Downtown Operations, along with many other Departments. Our thanks to the many sponsors of this sensational celebration, including AT&T, H-E-B, and Valero. To get involved in planning or to sponsor future Celebrate San Antonio events, please call Tonya Drake at 207-8423.

A Closer Look at La Villita & Market Square: Planning for Improvements to Historic Downtown Retail

by Bruce Martin, Contract Manager



La Villita and Market Square are unique historical and cultural landmarks, while also operating as active retail shopping centers. Despite the amount of commerce in these two centers, a professional retail management study has never been completed to provide recommendations regarding operations and management.

A 2006 Convention and Visitors Bureau study, Destination SA suggested that, by investing in evaluation of management and infrastructure at La Villita and Market Square, the facilities could be improved to benefit vendors, San Antonio area residents, the City and visitors.

Downtown Operations contracted with Urban Marketing Collaborative, a retail consulting firm specializing in urban revitalization, and the San Antonio-based firms of Ximenes & Associates and Core Research to evaluate factors affecting the competitive environment in La Villita and Market Square. The Study will provide an analysis of existing retail programs and provide recommendations for the management structure at each facility.

Early survey results indicate that downtown is a popular destination for San Antonio's residents, with 89% visiting downtown at least once a year, 58% visiting Market Square and 49% visiting La Villita in the last year. Despite the large number of local residents visiting these retail centers, 80% of sales are generated by tourists. The retail study, currently underway, will help shine light on recommendations that will make these two facilities the best they can be - not only for tourists, but also for vendors, San Antonio residents and the City of San Antonio.

A final study report is due for completion in Spring 2008 and a presentation will be made to City Council summarizing the findings and recommendations. After review by City Council, Downtown Operations will

and locations online.

Field Trips and Tour Buses

In an effort to address short-term parking needs for tour and school buses, the City has developed free options at three downtown locations. These options are conveniently located to allow the bus driver to drop off passengers at downtown destinations, park in a designated area, then pick up the group where they were dropped off.

The three locations are: Alamodome, parking lot "A", IH 37 & Durango; Crockett Street between Live Oak & Cherry; and Urban Loop, between Nueva & Santa Rosa. [Click here](#) to download a map of school/tour bus parking locations.

There are just a few simple rules and procedures that must be followed to utilize this free tour and school bus parking. For more information and to make reservations (recommended for the Alamodome parking lot), call the Dome Security Office at (210) 207-3680 between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Muddy Treasure

The items most frequently found during the annual winter river clean up are cell phones, cameras, parade chairs, restaurant cups and silverware.

People who have lost items in the river during the year can call downtown operations at (210) 207-3677 to make a report. Items found during the river cleaning will be returned if contact information is on file.

work with area stakeholders to develop plans for implementing the approved recommendations. For more information about the retail study, please contact Bruce Martin at 207-7426.

Parking Downtown: Studying Our Options

by Kenneth Appedole, Parking Division Manager

In 2007, the City launched a study to help inform development of a long-term strategy for the City's parking operations. The study will cover issues including cost, availability, and location of downtown parking facilities in order to best meet the needs of downtown residents and businesses, San Antonio area residents and out-of-town visitors.

The goal is to develop a Comprehensive Parking Management Program that will lead to increased awareness of parking availability, as well as stimulate economic development and integrate best management practices.

The study, which was launched in late 2006, focuses on a 125-block area in the Central Business District, bounded by Martin and Houston Streets on the north, Cherry Street on the east, Durango Boulevard on the south, and I-35/I-10 on the west.

Downtown stakeholder meetings were held throughout 2007 and a Parking Rate Structure Task Force comprised of representatives from the downtown community was appointed. The task force provided recommendations on parking fee structures that would be closer to market rates in order to fund repair and rehabilitation projects and make technological improvements.

Recommendations from the task force will be presented to City Council early 2008. Please visit the City Clerk online for more information about [council agendas and dates](#).



Light it Up, Drain it Down

by Lincoln St. George, Downtown Operations Manager



Tourists and San Antonians alike flock downtown for the spectacular holiday lights that adorn the trees along the River Walk...all 120,000 of them! The whole project is a joint effort among the Paseo del Rio Association and the City's Downtown Operations and Parks and Recreation Departments.

Crews start stringing lights in September and finish by November, working feverishly up to the Friday after Thanksgiving, when the magical river lighting ceremony and parade are held. About 250,000 people come for the sparkling event and the River Walk gets 900,000 visitors who come during the holiday season to enjoy the lights that stay on until January 1st.

What many don't realize is that as soon as the lights come down, the City drains the river for its annual cleaning. Public Works uses heavy machinery to clean the concrete-bottomed river channel that runs from Alamo Street on the south to Lexington to the north, and about 21 employees from Downtown Operations take part in cleaning the river.

The whole process takes from the 2nd to the 11th of January. Crews collect trash, repair walls and displace silt within the River Loop restaurant area.

On January 11th, the River channel is refilled and flowing again.

On January 13, 2008 from 2:00 p.m. till 6:00 p.m. the Paseo del Rio Association hosted the annual Mud Festival, when civic & media personalities vie for the title of Mud Queen & Mud King by competing to see who can raise the most money for the Association. The festival - which is attended by more than 15,000 people - features a Mud Pie Ball, Mud Coronation, Mud Parade, and an arts & crafts show. For more information, visit the [Paseo del Rio Association online](#) or call (210) 227-4262.

New Year's Bash Launches HemisFair 40th Anniversary

by Colleen Swain, Assistant Director, Downtown Operations



April 6, 1968 marked the opening of HemisFair - one of the most transformational initiatives in San Antonio's history - that brought millions of visitors from around the globe to the city. A major year-long celebration of HemisFair's 40th Anniversary kicked off December 31 at the annual New Year's Eve Bash, and a special anniversary ceremony will take place on Sunday, April 6 along with the NCAA's Final Four Big Dance festivities.

The Tower of the Americas built for HemisFair '68 forever changed downtown's skyline. Fast forward 40 years and HemisFair can also be credited with launching San Antonio's tourism industry that now generates more than \$8.7 billion for the region. HemisFair's anniversary is being planned by a committee comprised of Bill Sinkin, Patsy Steves, Lila Cockrell, Rosemary Kowalski, Ginger Purdy, Jim Dublin, Sterlin Holmesly, Mary Alice Cisneros and David Yanez representing State Senator Leticia Van de Putte.

Plans for the April 6th ceremony include a brief ceremony recognizing the members of the original executive committee and their families. The Institute of Texan Cultures (ITC) will air a short video highlighting some of the key moments that took place prior to and during the fair, and Jim Cullum's Jazz Band will conclude the event.

ITC will also host the opening reception on April 6 for "HemisFair 1968: San Antonio's Introduction to the World", a special exhibition that will remain on display at the museum through the remainder of 2008. The day's festivities will also include free rides to the observation deck of the Tower, free admission to ITC, the Mexican Cultural Institute and Universidad de Autonoma de Mexico, as well as live dance and musical performances.

To make a contribution, discuss sponsorship or volunteer your time in support of this milestone event, email colleen.swain@sanantonio.gov or call 207-4089.

City of San Antonio - Downtown Operations

The mission of the Downtown Operations Department is to provide centralized services for activities related to maintaining the core of San Antonio in an exemplary condition and support downtown facilities, programs and events that highlight the city's unique qualities as a business center and tourist destination.

Need assistance? Have a suggestion for the newsletter? Contact us with comments or questions at downtown@sanantonio.gov.

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www.sanantonio.gov/dtops

Hours: Monday-Friday 7:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

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