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

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## Mark Your Calendar

**March 29**  
Houston Street Fair & Market  
info: 207-7258 or [Website](#)

**March 29**  
[Cesar Chavez March](#)

**March 29**  
[Race for the Cure](#)

**April 4 - 7**

## Out & About Downtown

by Paula X. Stallcup, Director, Downtown Operations



The phrase "March Madness" certainly applies downtown this month. We have more events than ever, and there's something for everyone! Luminaria, the city's first all-night arts festival, was held on March 15 and was met with great success. Read more about this tradition-in-the-making with the record turnout for this spectacular event.

Around the corner is the NCAA Final Four Big Dance, starting April 4th. When the entire country will have its eyes on San Antonio, make sure you're part of the action! We'll also make history with the Grand Opening of Main Plaza. We'll celebrate this \$12 million renovation San Antonio style with live music, free food and lots of family fun on April 13th. True San Antonians also know that Fiesta is right around the corner...read more about all the excitement in this month's issue.

If health and wellness are at the top of your list, be sure to participate in the Komen San Antonio Race for the Cure on March 29th. Or take a stroll and visit some of the great public art pieces that are scattered throughout downtown. This month we're featuring the Torch of Friendship, donated by Mexico back in 2002.

So whether you want sports, big parties or exercise, downtown San Antonio has it all. If you have any questions or feedback, we encourage you to contact our office. Until then, we look forward to seeing you downtown!

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

## Light Up for the Arts

NCAA 2008 Final Four and The Big Dance  
 Dance NCAA: [The Big Dance](#)

**April 6**  
[HemisFair 40th Anniversary Celebration](#)  
 info: 207-3677

**April 13**  
[Main Plaza Grand Opening Ceremony](#)

**April 18-27**  
 Fiesta  
[www.fiesta-sa.org](http://www.fiesta-sa.org)

## The Big Dance



You don't have to go to the games to enjoy all the festivities celebrating the NCAA Final Four, when the top four basketball teams in the NCAA Division 1 Men's Basketball Tournament duke it out at the Alamodome for the National Championship. This is the third time San Antonio has been the proud host of this prime event, and we are pulling out all the stops! From April 4th to the 7th, downtown will be a buzz with a variety of events, including [The Big Dance](#). This huge celebration on South Alamo at HemisFair Park will take place every day and feature country's newest star, Taylor Swift, on the 6th and the one-and-only Robert Earl Keen on the 7th. Game days are April 5th and 7th, and party-goers won't want to miss a moment of the action as large screens on the stage will broadcast each game. Do you have a date for [The Big Dance](#)?

## Street Talk

by Tonya Drake, Downtown Operations



Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, was the inaugural event that formally recognized the arts and artists that illuminate the spirit of San Antonio every day. [Luminaria: Arts Night in San Antonio](#) was a landmark collaboration of artists who came together to celebrate the dynamic vitality of our city's creative spirit.

Although the center of attention was downtown, there were happenings all around the city. The downtown fest was like nothing San Antonio had ever seen and went from 6 pm to midnight. All the arts were represented, including dance, theater, visual arts, film, music and conceptual art, among others. Both locals and tourists came to the free event which provided a family-friendly atmosphere.

Congratulations to Mayor Hardberger, the originator of the idea, and all the city staff, artists and volunteers who made the magical evening come to life.

## Fiesta Ole'

by Tonya Drake, Downtown Operations

Take a deep breath and sport your most colorful attire! Fiesta starts Friday, April 18th, with the official opening ceremony beginning at 9 in the morning at Alamo Plaza. Then, a host of events goes on all day 'til midnight. Featured are A Taste of New Orleans at the newly restored Sunken Garden Theater from 4 pm to midnight and the Fiesta Oyster Bake at St. Mary's University from 5 to 11 pm.



This year features two new events, including Fiesta de los Niños at Port San Antonio on Hwy. 90 South on 36th Street on Saturday, April 19 and Fiesta Nueva at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 502 E. Nueva on Sunday, April 20. Of course, we still have the traditional happenings including NIOSA, the Battle of Flowers® Parade, Fiesta Flambeau® Parade and the King William Fair, to mention just a few. It only happens once a year, so be sure to make your plans to celebrate [Fiesta](#) in downtown San Antonio.

## It's Planting Season

by Lincoln St. George, Downtown Operations



Many will remember that the Torch of Friendship on Alamo and Commerce was commissioned to commemorate the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico and our commercial ties. The contemporary, red steel sculpture is 65 feet tall and weighs 50 tons. It was officially presented to the City by Mexican dignitaries in June 2002. This year, the sculpture received a makeover. It's been newly painted and the horticultural staff renovated its landscape.

It is picture-perfect, bursting with blooming shrubbery and mounds of bright annual colors, including flowers such as petunias, marigolds, begonias and impatiens.

Another prime downtown location is the Portal located next to Main Plaza along the River Walk. We've invited the original landscape architect of this Xeriscape park, Mrs. Rosa Finsley, to help bring the Plaza back to life. San



Our downtown sidewalks are getting some much needed attention. Cleaning crews with steam machines are working hard daily to remove gum pollution.

Staff estimate several thousand pieces of gum have been removed so far...but who's counting?

Crews are also removing tree grates from growing trees which have been causing damage. Once removed, landscaping staff are replacing the grates with crushed granite rock that allow maturing trees to expand comfortably. The process is not only much more beneficial for the trees, but it also makes a big improvement in the overall appearance of landscaping downtown.

## Race for the Cure



Step up to better health with your friends for the annual Susan G. Komen Race For The Cure on Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup>. Race activities for the popular event get started at 7:45 in the morning at the Alamodome. Many people have already joined the City of San Antonio Team, and you can still participate in the event by registering on-line at: [www.sakomen.org](http://www.sakomen.org).

Fernando Portal was originally planted with a variety of native plants that grow in South Texas. Mrs. Finsley is working with Downtown Operations staff to select plants for a new section of the park. You can see the finished product at the [Grand Opening Ceremony](#) on April 13, 2008.

## Main Plaza: A Glorious Grand Opening

by Paula X. Stallcup, Downtown Operations

Our 277-year-old Main Plaza has received much-deserved attention, thanks to the vision of Mayor Hardberger. The City and the County worked together to revitalize this gem. It will receive a fitting [Grand Opening](#) Sunday evening, April 13th, beginning with a mariachi mass at 5 PM. Highlights of the evening include live jazz music, children's activities, food, and family fun. The San Antonio Symphony will also perform at the dedication ceremony and inaugural lighting of the fountains.



Mayor Hardberger observed: "Main Plaza is truly the heart of our city. This is where it all began: the government, the religion, the culture and the spirit that is San Antonio. By preserving it and making it a comfortable oasis in the middle of town, future generations can also honor our past."

Main Plaza was established in 1731 as the Villa de San Fernando by Spanish settlers from the Canary Islands. It was the site of Texas' first municipality and the location of some of the most significant moments in Texas and U.S. history. The Battle of the Alamo began in Main Plaza. More than a century later, on the brink of civil war, Col. Robert E. Lee was confronted at a hotel bordering the plaza and run out of town when he refused to agree to secession. In 1861, General David Twiggs surrendered U.S. military posts and forces to Confederate forces in Main Plaza.

Today, Main Plaza is one of only a few plazas in the country that survives as a Spanish colonial plaza. Its redevelopment not only preserves its rich history, but ensures the Plaza will be a vibrant public gathering place with daily programming and events.

Private contributions and public investment helped make this vision a reality. A \$2 million donation from the Tobin Endowment provided funds for five interactive, ground-level fountains that are a spectacular sight at night! A grant from AT&T made the Plaza Wi-Fi accessible. Pedestrians can stroll through shaded areas with beautiful plantings. Distinctive stonework benches invite you to sit, relax and enjoy the ambience. There are also food kiosks and restrooms.

This grand opening ceremony is managed by the [Main Plaza Conservancy](#). Main Plaza Conservancy is a non-profit organization which was created to oversee the Plaza and host future events.

## 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](mailto:downtown@sanantonio.gov).

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