

City of San Antonio: Mission Verde Sustainability Plan Strategy #4: Transportation and Land Use

Initiative #7: Create an integrated, efficient multi-modal transportation system for San Antonio.

One of the foundations of a 21st Century sustainable urban economy is an integrated, efficient multi-modal transportation system, something San Antonio currently does not have. In July 2008, Mayor Hardberger and County Judge Nelson Wolff appointed a 12-person task force to address this issue in San Antonio.



In January 2009, the task force made findings and recommendations. The findings are sobering:

- Our transportation needs outstrip our funding.
- New state and federal funding will favor mass transit.
- To be economically competitive, we must offer efficient public transit options.
- Of the nation's ten largest cities, San Antonio is the only one without public rail transit.
- San Antonio has essentially no comprehensive transportation plan or shared vision for our transportation future.
- Our various transportation entities do not coordinate well.
- Global conditions will favor communities with multiple transportation options over those with a single mode or fuel source.

But the task force also made recommendations that can eventually get us to the transportation system needed in San Antonio:

- Seek local option funding legislation from the State Legislature.
- Aggressively pursue federal funding of local and regional "high capacity transit."
- Consolidate the Regional Mobility Authority and VIA Metropolitan Transit.
- Have VIA begun planning, funding, and development of an enhanced public transit system, including light rail.

- Support the Greater Austin San Antonio Corridor Council to create transportation options that can link the two cities and create the potential for larger industry clusters.
- Begin a community-based regional planning process.



The ultimate goal of the task force is to create a “Roadmap,” a transportation master plan for San Antonio that will create a sustainable transportation system for San Antonio.

Because San Antonio lags behind in transportation, we must waste no time in implementing these recommendations to develop the transportation system we need to support our expanding economy.

Action

Move as quickly as possible on the recommendations of the task force.

Timetable

February 2009: Begin the public transit planning at VIA and the regional planning process. Pursue federal funding for Austin-SA “high capacity” rail with help from the SA-Austin Corridor Council.

May 2009: Secure state legislation for local option funding and consolidation of the RMA and VIA.

Related documents:

Recommendations to the Mayor and County Judge of the San Antonio/Bexar County Transportation Task Force, January 2009.

Housing and Transportation Affordability in the San Antonio Metropolitan Region, December 2008

Initiative #8: Create new sustainable real estate development that is mixed-use, mixed income, walkable, and transit-oriented.

Land use affects energy consumption, public health, economic development, and air and water quality. The Transportation Task Force found that there is a “strong relationship” between land use and transportation: dense, mixed-use, walkable, and transit-oriented development reduces vehicle travel. San Antonio is not known for this kind of development, but it has several emerging examples:

- The Pearl Brewery—an adaptive reuse of 22 acres bordered by the San Antonio River just north of downtown, that is creating a mixed use development with residential, retail, educational, entertainment, office and recreational uses;
- River North—a mixed use development around the San Antonio River also just north of downtown that is linked by walkable streets and a trolley and is based on a form-based code;
- Verano—the first large-scale new urbanist community planned for San Antonio. It will be the home for the new Texas A & M campus and will fuse green building and operations with sustainable pedestrian-oriented community design and best practices in land use, waste management, and transit.



The City of San Antonio also has one of the most progressive Uniform Development Codes in the country with its alternative use patterns such as mixed-use Traditional Neighborhood Development, Transit Oriented Development, In-Fill Development, Commercial Retrofits, and Form Based Development.

San Antonio has the tools to create sustainable real estate development. What is needed is capital. In July 2008, the same fund building team that is working on the Venture Capital Fund and the Green Retrofit Program brought the Star Fund of Texas to San Antonio. The Star Fund is a real estate investment fund based in Dallas that is dedicated to investing in sustainable development. As a result of the Mayor’s Mission Verde effort, the Star Fund is now working with developers in San Antonio to provide equity capital, technical help, and gap financing for sustainable real estate development in San Antonio.

Action

Take advantage of the Star Fund of Texas and other similar funds to invest in sustainable development for San Antonio.

Timetable

Ongoing.

Related documents:

Report on the Star Fund of Texas, December 2008.

