

PLAN BASICS

The Lavaca Neighborhood Plan is the result of a joint effort of the Lavaca Neighborhood and the City of San Antonio's Planning Department. The nine-month planning process represents a comprehensive effort from the Planning Team, concerned residents, property owners, business owners, and church members to help ensure a healthy future for the Lavaca Neighborhood. While, there is no financial commitment from the City of San Antonio or any partnering organizations identified in the plan, the Lavaca Neighborhood Plan will be used as a guide for development and decision making in the future.

The Planning Area is defined by Durango Blvd. to the north from S. St. Mary's St. to IH-37; IH-37 to the east from Durango Blvd. to the intersection of IH-37 and the Union Pacific Railroad line; the railroad line to the south from the interstate highway to S. St. Mary's St.; and S. St. Mary's St. on the west.

Beginnings

The Lavaca Neighborhood had undertaken a number of planning efforts in the past including participation in the Downtown Neighborhood Planning process, and a neighborhood plan that was never adopted by the City of San Antonio. Residents felt that in order to assist with their efforts to improve the neighborhood as a whole and plan for future development, a recognized plan would help achieve their vision for the future. The Lavaca Neighborhood successfully submitted a 1998-99 application for planning services to the City's Planning Department. Subsequently, the Planning Department selected the Lavaca Neighborhood to receive planning services and began meeting with the Planning Team in August 2000. The Planning Team (See Appendix A-2) was composed of residents, business owners and representatives from business and governmental agencies with a stake in the future of the neighborhood.

The Community-Based Planning Process

The Planning Team and members of the City's Planning Department staff then worked together organize the First Public Meeting for the Lavaca Neighborhood Plan. At this meeting, which was held on August 10, 2000, citizens were given the opportunity to discuss strengths, weaknesses,



Lavaca planning area boundary map

PLAN BASICS

opportunities and threats facing the neighborhood. Several residents also volunteered to host “kitchen table discussions”, where neighbors who were unable to attend the First Public Meeting, were invited to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood in the kitchens and living rooms of their neighbors. All of the participants’ comments from the First Public Meeting and the “kitchen table discussions” were compiled and presented to the community at the Second Public Meeting held on August 24, 2000. This offered residents another opportunity to refine ideas and comment on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified in the previous meeting and discussions (See Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Map). These issues identified by the residents would serve as a guide for developing goals, objectives and action steps for the plan document. At this meeting, interested citizens were encouraged to volunteer their time to developing the goals, objectives and action steps for the plan by signing up for citizen work groups.

The citizen work groups were divided into three groups, each concentrating on a specific set of issues identified by neighbors in the two public meetings and kitchen table discussions. The three workgroups were: *The Heart of the Neighborhood*, which covered housing issues and economic development; *Getting Around Town and Rebuilding Our Infrastructure*, which addressed transportation systems and infrastructure issues in the neighborhood; and *Places Where We Play, Gather and Learn*, which addressed issues related to schools, community safety and community appearance. Each work group met numerous times during the months of September, October and November 2000 to develop the goals, objectives and action steps identified in this document as vital tasks for revitalizing the Lavaca Neighborhood. During this process, the citizen work groups met with Planning Department staff, staff from various City departments, representatives from other governmental agencies such as the San Antonio Development Agency and VIA Metropolitan Transit to form new partnerships and begin developing strategies to improve conditions in the neighborhood. The work groups completed their strategy development in early November 2000, however their work was not complete.

Together, the City’s Planning Department and all three workgroups met in November 2000 to devise a comprehensive land use plan. The Land Use Plan (see page 35) is a comprehensive plan for the desired future use of the land within the planning area and is based on existing

PLAN BASICS

land use patterns and the citizens' vision for the future of the Lavaca Neighborhood. While, the Land Use Plan does not affect any property's use or zoning and does not establish zoning designations, the plan will be used a guide by City staff and elected officials for determining appropriateness of proposed zoning changes in the future.

The timing of this planning process also coincided with a major redevelopment effort in the area. The recent closure and demolition of the Victoria Courts, a World War II era public housing project, was an excellent opportunity for the San Antonio Housing Authority, the site developer, designers and residents to focus their efforts on gaining consensus on development and design concepts that would not only be functional and aesthetically pleasing, but well integrated with the rest of the neighborhood. A consolidated workgroup met three times during the months of November and December 2000 and came to a consensus with the development/design team on the conceptual re-design of the site (See Victoria Courts Redevelopment section). An ad-hoc committee was also formed to provide neighborhood input during the design process of buildings as it occurs.

During March 2000, City departments and other governmental agencies had the opportunity to review the plan for consistency with City regulations and policies. All of the organizations listed as lead partners and proposed partners were asked to review and support the relevant goals, objectives and actions steps in the plan.

A final draft of the plan was presented to the community at the Final Public Meeting in March 2001 and was the final opportunity for the neighborhood to make changes to the plan document prior to consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council.

Community Outreach

The City's Planning Department, Lavaca Neighborhood, and Southtown Urban Main Street Program worked extensively to encourage community-wide participation. Along with a mailing list that included property owners, tenants, businesses, and stakeholders, the Lavaca neighborhood distributed flyers door-to-door and distributed flyers to local businesses to publicize meetings. In

PLAN BASICS

In addition meeting notices were published in the *San Antonio Express News*, the Lavaca Neighborhood Association's newsletter and the King William Association's newsletter.

Consistency with Other Plan Documents

The Lavaca Neighborhood Plan was developed following the guidelines established in the *Community Building and Neighborhood Planning Program* (approved by City Council in October 1998). The plan is consistent with the *Downtown Neighborhood Plan*, the *1978 Major Thoroughfare Plan*, the *1999 Parks System Plan*, the *1998 CRAG Final Report*, and the *2000 CRAG Report*. The Lavaca Neighborhood Plan is consistent with the *1997 Master Plan* and is supported by the following goal found in the 1997 Master Plan document:

Neighborhoods, Goal 2: Strengthen the use of the Neighborhood Planning Process and neighborhood plans.