





DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

The rich history of downtown San Antonio is a mosaic of singular events and iconic structures. The city's civic, cultural and religious roots began here, with the establishment of the San Antonio de Valero Mission, better known as the Alamo. Today, it remains home to many of the institutions that define San Antonio – city and county government, San Fernando Cathedral, Main Plaza and the San Antonio River.

But the face of modern downtown was fundamentally impacted by one event: HemisFair '68. The world's fair was a coming out party for a new San Antonio. Hotels and pavilions were constructed in record time. A new sense of civic pride was instilled in the community. And more than 40 years later, its imprint is still visible on the downtown skyline, which would be unrecognizable without the Tower of the Americas.

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, downtown is not a boarded up ghost town—or “donut hole”—like downtowns in other American cities. But better downtown business and job opportunities will be created only if the city's urban core becomes a primary gathering point for its residents, in addition to being a haven for tourists.

With a population of 1.3 million people, San Antonio has sprawled outward, making transportation and commute times more challenging than ever before. In the process, many San Antonians venture downtown only occasionally to bring visiting friends and relatives to attend a particular event.

With a renewed purpose, downtown can truly become everyone's neighborhood. Projects big and small are changing the face of the area. The San Antonio River has been expanded and improved to the north and south. Bike share programs and more walkable streets are changing the look and feel of downtown.

And during 2011, hundreds of residents have attended public meetings to offer input on the coming makeover of HemisFair Park.

The history of downtown San Antonio is rich and unique. But much of that history is yet to be written.

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IN 2020, DOWNTOWN IS THE HEART OF SAN ANTONIO AND IS EVERYONE'S NEIGHBORHOOD.

It is a showcase for visitors, a center of vibrant activity for citizens to live, work and play, and an economically inviting locale for businesses to flourish. Downtown's historic buildings and character are preserved, its parks and green spaces are inviting, and the river continues to be treasured as its defining asset.*

**For the purpose of SA 2020, "downtown" is described as the area bordered by Interstate 35 to the north, Monumental Street to the east, South Alamo/Lone Star Streets to the south, and Colorado Street to the west. However, by 2020, the area we describe as downtown will likely have expanded.*

SAN ANTONIO TODAY. SAN ANTONIO TOMORROW.

BASELINE DATA AND TARGETS FOR THE YEAR 2020.

KEY INDICATORS OR MEASURES OF WHERE WE ARE TODAY.

- ▶ **HOUSING UNITS DOWNTOWN:** There are 3,383 housing units in downtown (Downtown Alliance).
TARGET: INCREASE DOWNTOWN HOUSING UNITS BY 5,000 INCLUDING MIXED INCOME AND STUDENT HOUSING.
- ▶ **PEOPLE WORKING DOWNTOWN (PUBLIC, PRIVATE NON-RETAIL, AND RETAIL):** In 2000, 9.5% of all San Antonio employees (55,100 workers) worked downtown (U.S. Census).
TARGET: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF DOWNTOWN EMPLOYEES BY 25% (13,775 ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEES).

SUPPORTING INDICATORS OR MEASURES OF WHERE WE ARE TODAY.

- › **SURVEY: QUALITATIVE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING DOWNTOWN:** The survey would measure satisfaction with the downtown experience, including perceptions of cleanliness, pedestrian-friendliness, safety, vibrancy and authenticity.
TARGET: To be developed, after baseline data determined.
- › **TRANSPORTATION MODE OPTIONS MEASURED BY VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED:** As residents and commuters exercise a wider range of transportation options, and as more people live closer to where they work and shop, vehicle miles traveled should decrease. In 2007, total daily vehicle miles traveled in San Antonio were 30.4 million, or 21 vehicle miles per person per day.
TARGET: Reduce vehicle miles travelled per person by 10%.
- › **KEEPING IT SAFE: CRIME RATES DOWNTOWN (IN CONTEXT WITH PEER CITIES):** The goal is to contrast people's perceptions of safety downtown (see earlier indicator) with the actual crime rates. Currently, the SAPD does not break out crime rates for the downtown area.
TARGET: To be developed, after baseline data determined.

- › **DOWNTOWN ACTIVITY BY SECTOR:** This indicator will capture cultural activity, retail activity, leisure/convention tourism activity, attendance at historic sites, restaurant activity, and other components of downtown. Additional planning with downtown organizations will help further refine this measure.

TARGET: To be developed, after baseline data determined.

WHO ARE POTENTIAL PARTNERS TO IMPLEMENT THIS VISION?

Achieving these goals will require the support and active participation of a broad range of groups. The following list is not a comprehensive list of potential partners. Rather, it is a list of some key potential partners that were identified during the visioning process. They include:

- › Centro Partnership San Antonio, Centro San Antonio and the Downtown Alliance.
- › City of San Antonio Departments and Programs: Center City Development Office, Development Services, Police Department, Downtown Operations, Office of Cultural Affairs, International and Economic Development, Planning and Community, Development, Office of Urban Renewal, Office of Historic Preservation and Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones.
- › Chambers of Commerce.
- › Tourism Council and Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- › Bexar County, San Antonio Housing Authority, San Antonio Independent School District, San Antonio River Authority and VIA.
- › HemisFair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation, West Side Development Corporation, San Antonio Growth for the East Side, La Villita, El Mercado Merchants Association and St. Paul Square.
- › Public Art San Antonio and other arts organizations.
- › Downtown Residents Association.
- › Greater San Antonio Builders Association and Realtors Alliance.
- › Museums and cultural institutions.
- › Paseo del Rio.
- › San Antonio Conservation Society.
- › Downtown and near-downtown area neighborhood associations.
- › University of Texas San Antonio and General Services Administration.
- › Banking and financial institutions.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED:

SA 2020 invites you to become part of the effort to accomplish this Vision. Here are some examples of potential action steps identified during the visioning process. For a full list, please visit SA2020.org:

- › Explore living downtown.
- › Frequent downtown businesses, cultural institutions and events.
- › Use public transportation to get downtown.
- › Insist on and promote preservation of historic buildings.
- › Open your own business downtown.
- › Learn about the history of downtown and the processes that influenced development.
- › Vote for council members who want downtown to grow.
- › Work to complete the Downtown Civic Center Master Plan Final Phase, which links Market Square to the San Antonio River.
- › Participate in the downtown strategic plan update.
- › Visit the San Antonio River for dining, shopping, and recreational opportunities.
- › Host my next business meeting in a downtown venue.



PERSONAL COMMITMENTS:

Participants in the SA 2020 process made personal commitments to turn this Vision into action. The following list is not a comprehensive list of personal commitments. Rather, it is a list of some of the commitments made during the visioning process. To view the entire list of personal commitments made during the visioning process, please visit the SA 2020 website at SA2020.org:

- › I plan to continue to live downtown.
- › I will participate in town hall meetings and community service plans.
- › I will promote downtown activities and commit to spending more time downtown.
- › I will commit to helping bring a local neighborhood grocery store to downtown.
- › I will help make activities like Fiesta and Luminaria even better, because they help make downtown feel like the heart of the city.
- › Encourage my family to go downtown to shop, eat, and recreate instead of going to "the mall."
- › I plan to go back and visit the Alamo when my friends are in town.

But better downtown business and job opportunities will be created only if the city's urban core becomes a primary gathering point for its residents, in addition to being a haven for tourists.



HOW DOES DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT CONNECT TO THE OTHER VISION AREAS?

Great cities have great downtowns. And the linkages between a vibrant, energetic and growing **downtown** and an inviting and efficient **transportation** system are undeniable.

Great downtowns offer culture, convenience and a variety of transportation options for getting in and out of center cities.

We are not where we want to be yet. But with the help of groups like the Centro Partnership and the HemisFair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation (HPARC), it's now possible to envision a time when San Antonio will possess a downtown that is as attractive to residents as it is to tourists with a modern **multi-modal transportation** system linking it to **neighborhoods** across the city. Perhaps Don Frost, the Centro Partnership co-chair, put it best when he said, "My hope is that downtown will be everyone's neighborhood."