

Strategic Historic Preservation Plan

Annual Implementation Report September 2011



In 2009, the City of San Antonio initiated a public planning process to develop a Strategic Historic Preservation Plan (SHPP). The purpose of the SHPP is to create a long-term vision and a set of practical and achievable strategies for improving the City's historic preservation program while building a more broad-based historic preservation ethic within the San Antonio community. The Plan also seeks to build on past successes by acknowledging the role historic preservation plays in shaping the city's urban form and character, in contributing to the city's overall economic development, and in sustaining a high quality of life for all San Antonio residents, businesses, and visitors.

The SHPP brings together in one place, the many and diverse initiatives, programs, needs, opportunities, goals, and principles related to the preservation of San Antonio. The Plan is used as a work program to change and streamline current historic preservation efforts, as well as a guideline for future planning and development efforts. The SHPP reflects input from a broad range of partners, not only traditional preservation advocates but business interests and development advocates as well. Good preservation and development go hand in hand; one supports the other. The Plan recognizes this and outlines strategies to foster both in ways that benefit the whole.

The implementation of the Strategic Historic Preservation Plan requires strong and effective partnerships. During the first two years of implementation, the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) has worked with an Internal Implementation Working Group among City staff as well as an External Implementation Task Force to prioritize the various recommendations in the Plan. By partnering with private businesses, non profit organizations, professional associations, governmental agencies, and neighborhood groups, the OHP ensures that a holistic approach is taken in prioritizing programs and initiatives. Whether it is creating a new public outreach event or drafting design guidelines, strong partnerships allow the OHP to make informed decisions with broad community input and support.

The SHPP includes recommendations in six categories: Planning, Zoning, Economic Development, Historic Resources, Incentives, and Education and Advocacy. The Plan provides concrete strategies with short, mid, and long-term outcomes to improve preservation programs over the next 5 to 15 years. Many of the recommendations in the SHPP have been implemented since its adoption two years ago. The following information will highlight the major recommendations, priorities, and accomplishments to date in each of the six categories.



State of Preservation Announcement



Kids' Amazing Preservation Race



This Place Matters



Tobin Hill Historic District street signs unveiling

Planning Strategies

Incorporating historic preservation elements, such as resource surveys and historic district designations, into neighborhood and district plans should be ongoing activities to ensure that historic resources are identified and reinvestment in them encouraged. Specific strategies include:

- Create one set of goals and objectives that become the City’s official vision and policies for historic preservation.
- Incorporate historic preservation elements in all citywide, district, and neighborhood planning initiatives.
- Promote preservation as a “green” and sustainable planning and development approach.
- Plan for the future of key historic areas of the City.

Key Accomplishments

- The Office of Historic Preservation formed the Historic Districts Council to advise City departments, boards, and commissions on issues impacting local historic districts.
- The Office of Historic Preservation is now fully staffed with 11 full time employees including a dedicated enforcement officer.
- OHP and Code Enforcement staff are testing and enhancing an “early warning system” to identify endangered historic properties *before* they become threatened with eminent demolition.



Go! Historic SA Guided Running/Walking Tours

Incentives Strategies

Incentives play an important role in encouraging the rehabilitation and reuse of historic resources. Existing incentive programs should be enhanced and new ones created to address specific preservation issues such as endangered properties or to facilitate the adaptive use of “white elephant” buildings. Specific strategies include:

- Enhance the effectiveness of existing historic preservation incentives and create additional programs that encourage reinvestment in historic resources.
- Streamline and expand promotion of preservation programs and incentives to property owners, builders, developers, and investors.
- Determine and remove disincentives and obstacles to preserving and reusing historic resources.

Key Accomplishments

- Changes to the local tax incentive for rehabilitation that allow the exemption to apply to the property for the full ten years regardless of ownership thereby providing a true incentive for the rehabilitation of the property itself and encouraging additional investment in central city historic neighborhoods have increased the number of properties that have utilized the tax incentive.
- OHP established a \$250,000 revolving fund for the acquisition, rehabilitation and resale of historic properties in partnership with the San Antonio Conservation Society and Merced Housing and a \$350,000 revolving fund for owner-occupied rehabilitation low-interest loans. Both funds are designed to combat deterioration in the central city.
- OHP is collaborating with Center City Development Office and others regarding strategic redevelopment and infill opportunities utilizing historic buildings and in historic neighborhoods. OHP is actively involved in implementation of policies and programs such as the Inner City Reinvestment and Infill Policy (ICRIP).

The full text of the SHPP and an Implementation Matrix that includes all of the plan recommendations along with a current status are available on the Office of Historic Preservation website at www.sanantonio.gov/historic.

Historic Resources Strategies

Understanding which existing resource inventories need updating and what new areas of San Antonio should be inventoried are important priorities for the City and the Office of Historic Preservation. Identifying endangered and distressed properties that need intervention should be a strong priority. Making survey information available online and published documents for public access should also be high priorities. Specific strategies include:

- Update existing surveys and conduct new inventories of historic resources throughout the City.
- Use the new information to designate additional districts and target public and private resources.
- Use the new information to create an “early warning” system to increase awareness and action regarding endangered sites, buildings, landscapes, and viewsheds.
- Make surveys more accessible to the public to promote a greater understanding of significant historic resources.

Key Accomplishments

- The OHP conducts training for volunteer survey teams, leads surveys of new neighborhoods, and updates existing surveys. Examples include Denver Heights and various neighborhoods and landmarks on the Westside.
- OHP launched the Westside Cultural Resources Survey in partnership with the Westside Historic Preservation Group as part of the comprehensive survey and designation initiative to identify that which is important to the community.
- The Historic Building Enforcement Officer position was created in 2011 to investigate permit and code violations related to historic properties and work with property owners to make necessary repairs.
- OHP and Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) created a survey and case history database that will be made accessible to the public through the City’s website. OHP has digitized the survey information for over 7,000 properties in the first two years.

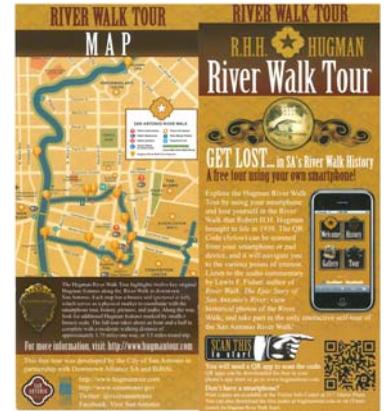
Zoning Strategies

Specific recommendations are made to improve the organization, readability, and overall effectiveness of the historic preservation provisions found within the City’s Unified Development Code (UDC). Other city zoning strategies focus on design guidelines and promoting more appropriate development in and around local historic districts and other important areas such as the Missions National Historical Park. Specific strategies include:

- Consolidate and create standard design guidelines to facilitate Office of Historic Preservation and Historic Design Review Commission (HDRC) reviews of public and private development initiatives and activities.
- Ensure zoning in neighborhoods and commercial districts promotes the preservation and reuse of historic resources.
- Consider form-based zoning within and nearby local historic districts.

Key Accomplishments

- OHP secured funding for design guidelines for all historic districts and landmarks. Guidelines to be completed in 2012 and will be designed in a way that individual historic districts can work with OHP and the HDRC to add guidelines specific to each district as needed.
- After an extensive public input process, City Council adopted amendments to the River Improvement Overlay standards to better protect the significant public investment in the River.



R. H. H. Hugman River Walk Tour brochure



Paseo por el Westside



S.T.A.R.

Economic Development Strategies

Historic preservation should receive an equal or comparable consideration in all City-driven economic development initiatives. Furthermore, implementing historic preservation-based economic development initiatives should be a high priority for revitalizing the City's inner-core neighborhoods and commercial districts. Specific strategies include:

- Increase public awareness that historic preservation contributes to the City's economic development.
- Consider preservation actions as integral components of existing and potential business district and neighborhood revitalization programs.
- Create new preservation initiatives that facilitate rehabilitation and reuse of historic resources, revitalization of neighborhoods and commercial districts, and creation of new jobs and small businesses.

Key Accomplishments

- Collaborated with UTSA College of Architecture and other partners to create the S.T.A.R. Project (Students Together Achieving Revitalization), which assists owners with costly maintenance issues such as painting, window repair and landscaping. Students from UTSA gain valuable hands-on training while helping a community in need.
- The Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Downtown Operations, Downtown Alliance, and OHP partnered to create an interactive tour of the original Robert H.H. Hugman features of the River Walk to promote heritage tourism.



3rd annual Historic Homeowner Fair

Education and Advocacy Strategies

Promoting the importance of historic preservation in safeguarding the City's unique heritage and in revitalizing neighborhoods should be ongoing activities. Implementing a comprehensive program of education and advocacy initiatives can also create opportunities to forge critical partnerships with other non-profit groups and civic organizations. Specific strategies include:

- Undertake a comprehensive outreach effort to increase awareness of the benefits of historic preservation.
- Harness public and private resources to market the numerous incentives and programs available to property owners, builders, and developers.

Key Accomplishments

- OHP received the Downtown Alliance BEST Marketing Award for the broad public education and outreach initiative.
- OHP worked with partners and sponsors to host a number of activities for Preservation Month in May. Activities include a "State of Historic Preservation" press event, the Amazing Preservation Race for kids, the Amazing Preservation Race, the *This Place Matters* photo contest, and Infill Design Charette for high school students and launched the Go! Historic SA Guided Running and Walking Tours.
- On August 27, 2011, OHP hosted the third annual Historic Homeowner Fair and published a free Historic House Handbook that was first released to attendees of the Fair. The handbook will also be used throughout the year as a free resource to historic homeowners and HDRC applicants. Over 500 people attended the Fair with 12 educational sessions, kids activities, vendors and hands-on demonstrations.
- OHP sends out a monthly e-newsletter, maintains a presence on Facebook and Twitter, and hosts regular preservation networking events.
- OHP hosts continuing education training classes for realtors and hands-on window rehabilitation workshops.
- OHP partnered with the UTSA College of Architecture to create a design assistance program for applicants to the HDRC who need technical design or application assistance.



The Amazing Preservation Race