

# HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN CLIMATE CHANGE CONVERSATIONS

## THE CLIMATE CONNECTION

*"Set within a river valley and sprawling out over its surrounding hills, San Antonio will not - because it cannot - fully escape the convergence of climate and geography that produces...rampaging waters that regularly have scoured the floodplain on which the city has been built."*  
Char Miller, *On the Border: An Environmental History of San Antonio*

In 2018, San Antonio embarked on a public process to draft the Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP), a roadmap to reduce carbon emissions, adapt to a changing climate, and ensure San Antonio remains a healthy, vibrant place for generations to come. This represents a critical moment for preservationists, who have been engaging with sustainable practices including adaptive reuse, material conservation, and traditional crafts and trades for decades. The Office of Historic Preservation partnered with the Office of Sustainability to incorporate heritage values into the CAAP at every



Courtesy of the San Antonio Conservation Society Foundation

## SIGNIFICANT SPACES AT RISK

The River Walk is perhaps least known for its genesis as a flood control project, but that lack of awareness belies its contribution to the city's ongoing struggle with rising water. All five Missions recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site are located along the banks of the river. San Antonio's historic built environment is preserved through a variety of local planning tools, including designation as local landmarks and historic districts or design review requirements for neighborhood conservation districts, river improvement overlays, viewsheds, and corridor overlays.

## PLANNING FOR HISTORY'S FUTURE

**The partnership between the Offices of Sustainability and Historic Preservation in every chapter of the CAAP:**

### Mitigation

- Energy Efficiency Programs
- Reduced-Landfill Construction
- Material Reuse and Circularity
- Climate Sensitive Design
- Business Incentives

### Adaptation

- Building Retrofits
- Climate Risk in Development Review
- Resilience in Building Codes
- Climate Heritage Strategic Plan
- Resilience Education and Outreach
- Anti-Displacement Measures
- Climate Equity Screening Mechanism
- Theme 3: Cultural Preservation

## DATA DRIVEN

Establishing a baseline inventory, San Antonio's citywide survey initiative called ScoutSA has collected data for five thousand properties within just the last five years. Areas of particular interest include the World Heritage Buffer Zone and Westside neighborhoods threatened by increased development pressure. Existing survey data for another ten thousand properties is being digitized and georeferenced to increase public accessibility. The Office of Historic Preservation has also commissioned studies regarding the economic impact of cultural heritage, energy retrofits most appropriate for our local climate, and the relationship between preservation and

