



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY NEWS



In Retrospect: A Look Back at 2019

Doug Melnick, Chief Sustainability Officer

As 2019 draws to a close, we look back on a year of accomplishments that we worked on together, and I want to offer my appreciation to the forward-thinking San Antonio community. Building on a legacy of innovation and conservation, we successfully passed [SA Climate Ready](#), the City's first Climate Action & Adaptation Plan that outlines specific and achievable strategies for San Antonio to do its part in protecting our people and valuable infrastructure, diversify the job market, and enhance quality-of-life. Thanks to all who lent their voices to this remarkable endeavor. We stand proud with other cities around the world who acknowledge responsibility for resiliency.

Not only did we pass the plan, we also put eight strategies into immediate action. Through our participation in the American Cities Climate Challenge, we are focusing on short-term greenhouse gas reduction measures in both the transportation and building energy sectors, the areas with the most impact, but also where we have the most opportunity to reduce emissions.

2020 will be an exciting year as we expand on the sustainability triple bottom line of equity, economy and environment through the action of SA Climate Ready. We look forward to continued engagement in our community and to hearing from you!

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Help the City Become #SAClimateReady

The Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP) recommends the creation of two committees to advise City staff and City Council on the advancement and implementation of the CAAP. As the SA Climate Ready Plan is centered on equity, membership in both committees shall represent those that live and work within the City of San Antonio, inclusive of indigenous persons, communities of color, low-income residents, LGBTQIA+ persons, persons with varying ages and abilities, and other marginalized communities who hold diverse expertise, identities, and/or perspectives.

TECHNICAL & COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

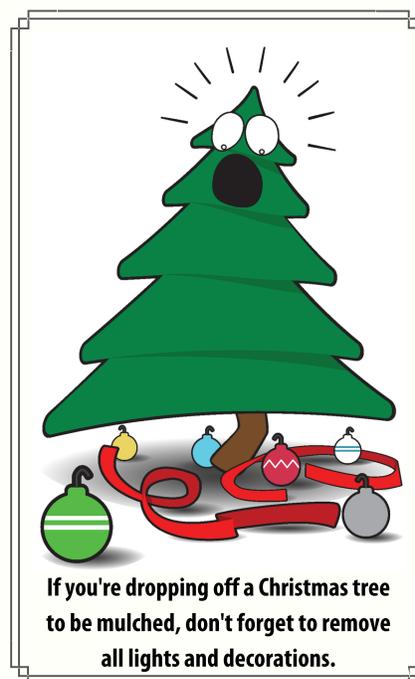
- 15 at-large members and 6 organizational members
- Provide expertise, diverse perspectives, and input regarding implementation of the CAAP as the City works to achieve greenhouse gas reduction and adaptation goals
- Gather and review the latest scientific information on climate change
- Deliver an annual report to City Council on committee activities

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CLIMATE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 11 at-large representatives from community-based organizations and other key stakeholders representing the interests of low-income populations, communities of color, and marginalized populations
- Selections shall be based on expertise or perspective
- Provide input on the implementation of the CAAP to ensure an equity-centered approach
- Identify, track and report climate equity metrics

Please stay tuned for the latest information on the committees. Applications will soon be available online.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Center City Development Office's latest boats along the River Walk are all electric and create zero emissions. The electric batteries are expected to last four years and are fully recyclable. Not only will these boats reduce carbon emissions but they'll also provide cleaner air for residents and visitors.



Q&A with the City Auditor

Kevin Barthold, City Auditor

Municipal Sustainability pertains to all 30+ departments and the 15,000+ employees that work for the City of San Antonio. This year, the Office of Sustainability transitioned to facilitating and tracking environmental initiatives in each department compared to previous years where there was one goal for the entire organization. Operations in each department are unique and complex; the objectives chosen by each department reflect that.

Since this is the first year, there was an expectation that most department would experience a learning curve. Establishing department sustainability objectives can be difficult but the City Auditor's Office went above and beyond. Some of your department's objectives for FY20 include reducing energy usage, eliminating single-use plastics, training employees on climate change and utilizing telecommuting and flex scheduling.

Was the ambitious approach driven by executive leadership, the culture within the department or a combination of both?

Kevin Barthold: Our approach was driven by common sense. We treat resources as our own and therefore try to save them. This applies whether it's financial resources, time, and natural resources.

Which objective do you think will be the most difficult to achieve within the year?

Barthold: Eliminating single use plastics. Alternates are usually more expensive and we also need to consider the need to wash dishes and the impact on water usage - a more precious resource for us in San Antonio.

The City Auditor's Office was the first to begin tracking remote work or telecommuting hours. It's great baseline data to have in order to see if specific policies make an impact on employee behavior. Was there any pushback from staff members reporting their hours in the beginning?

Barthold: No. We explained why we were tracking and staff understands.

Removing personal mini-fridges or desk-side heaters can be met with a lot of resistance but it's a quick way to reduce energy usage. Any insight in your approach?

Barthold: For desk-side heaters, we worked with building management to adjust building temperature to eliminate the need for additional heaters. For mini-fridges, we try to make sure there is ample refrigerator capacity in the breakrooms to minimize the need for mini-fridges at the desk.

You've been with the City of San Antonio since 2008. Within the organization, what do you think the biggest changes pertaining to sustainability in the past 10 years?

Barthold: 10 years ago, I don't think sustainability was ever mentioned within the office environment.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Finance Department coordinates with CPS Energy to convert street lights to LEDs. Currently, over 60% of street lights have been converted to LEDs. The emissions from streetlights & traffic signals decreased 22% between 2014 and 2016, primarily due to the installation of LEDs. We're striving to reach 100% conversion by 2021.



Electric Vehicles in San Antonio

Did you know that 34% of San Antonio's greenhouse gas emissions come from people driving in single-occupant vehicles? In recent years, levels of air pollution in San Antonio have been measured higher than allowed by federal clean air standards. Prolonged exposure to polluted air particularly threatens the health of children, people who are active or work outdoors and those with respiratory illnesses but one way we can lessen our impact on emissions is through the use of electric vehicles. Electric vehicles or EVs are clean, economical and quiet.

The Office of Sustainability would like to know how the City can encourage and support the use of EVs. You can provide input on electric vehicles or recommend areas for charging stations by clicking [here](#). You'll also find a number of resources: Electric Vehicles 101, Charging 101, Workplace Charging 101.



Sustainable Transportation Initiatives

The American Cities Climate Challenge is an unprecedented opportunity for 25 ambitious cities to deepen and accelerate efforts to tackle climate change and promote a sustainable future for their residents. The Climate Challenge provides the City with access to the country's leading technical assistance providers to advance strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the [transportation and building energy sectors](#). In San Antonio, these four short-term transportation initiatives have been prioritized.

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| 1 | | High-Frequency Public Transit Network |
| 2 | | Advancing Vehicle Electrification |
| 3 | | Enhanced Commuter Incentives |
| 4 | | Public Transit Speed, Reliability & User Experience |



PARTNERS IN SUSTAINABILITY

UTSA's Office of Sustainability was launched at the beginning of 2019 to help support, facilitate, and advance sustainable projects and university wide initiatives. The SUSTAIN program funds sustainable projects proposed and selected by a student committee. Current projects include a feasibility study for potential water reuse to offset potable irrigation, Architecture students' design for a smart home, and the Tito Bradshaw Bicycle Repair Shop to improve walkability on campus. Other initiatives the Office supports include the UTSA Roadrunner Food Pantry, Recyclemania (ranked 3rd among Texas Universities), Student Community Garden, and MetroHealth's effort to replace inefficient gas caps to improve air quality. Visit sustainability.utsa.edu for more information.