



INTRODUCTION, EXISTING CONDITIONS, VISION AND GOALS

SA TOMORROW SUB-AREA PLANNING:
EASTSIDE COMMUNITY AREA PLAN

PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT – FEBRUARY 2022

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1 Introduction

Process and Timeline

The process of developing the Eastside Community Area Plan was approximately 2 ½ years from project chartering to City Council adoption. Planning Department staff worked with a wide range of community members that included neighborhood organizations and representatives, business and property owners, employers, educational and medical institutions, and partner organizations and City departments to create a realistic and implementable plan for this community.

Phase 1: Project Chartering

October – December 2018:

The first phase of the project focused on project chartering. This phase ensures the planning process has a clear timeline and supports the overall goals of SA Tomorrow, while identifying key stakeholders to be involved in the process. Project chartering also included determining the Planning Team membership, finalizing the detailed plan area boundaries, and refining projections for future housing, job, and population growth within all Regional Centers and high capacity transit corridors.

Phase 2: Analysis and Visioning

January – May 2019:

The second phase of the project focused on assessing the existing conditions and growth capacity of the Eastside Community Area Plan, while drafting a vision and set of goals for the future of the area with Planning Team and community direction. The analysis and refinement of existing conditions helped ensure that the vision and goals for the Eastside Community Area Plan are grounded in the proper context.

Phase 3: Plan Framework

May 2019 – January 2021

The third phase of the project focused on working with the community and stakeholders to establish the Plan Framework. The Plan Framework components include Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Mobility, Amenities, Public Space, and Infrastructure, and Focus Areas/Corridors.

Phase 4: Recommendation and Implementation Strategies

March 2020 – May 2021

The fourth phase developed specific projects, programs, and policies to effect change in the Eastside Community Area Plan. This phase also included the development of specific, action-oriented implementation strategies and recommendations for potential funding sources.

Phase 5: Documentation and Adoption

May 2021 – January 2022

The last phase of the project was devoted to converting this project website into the final ePlan for the Eastside Community Area Plan, creating the Executive Summary, and guiding the plan through the approval and adoption process. The Project Team met with City departments and other partners to develop critical next steps to support implementation of the plan.

Stakeholders

The Eastside Community Area Plan planning process included a range of engagement activities such as interviews, workshops, meetings, town hall events, and community meetings with stakeholders from the following groups:

- Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG)
- Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO)
- Alamodome Gardens Neighborhood Association
- City Council District 2
- City of San Antonio Development Services Department
- City of San Antonio Department of Sustainability
- City of San Antonio Economic Development Department
- City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District
- City of San Antonio Neighborhood and Housing Services Department
- City of San Antonio Public Works Department
- City of San Antonio Transportation Department
- City of San Antonio Office of Innovation
- City of San Antonio Office of Sustainability
- City of San Antonio Parks and Recreation
- Coliseum/Willow Park Neighborhood Association
- Coliseum Oaks Home Owners Association
- Denver Heights Neighborhood Association
- Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association
- Government Hill Alliance Neighborhood Association
- Government Hill Community Association
- Harvard Place/Eastlawn Neighborhood Association
- Neighborhoods 1st Alliance
- San Antonio Conservation Society
- San Antonio Housing Authority
- San Antonio Public Library
- San Antonio River Authority (SARA)
- San Antonio Water System (SAWS)
- San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside
- St. Phillip's College
- Texas Research and Technology Foundation
- VIA Metropolitan Transit

The Planning Team

- Adrian Jackson
 - St. Phillip's College
- Alan Neff
 - Denver Heights Neighborhood Association
- Anita Longoria
 - Jefferson Heights Neighborhood Association
- Arrie Porter

- San Antonio Housing Authority
- Art Herrera
 - VIA Metropolitan Transit
- Aubrey Lewis
 - Denver Heights Neighborhood Association
- Barbara McDonald
 - Denver Heights/Alamodome Area
- Bertha Sevilla
 - Coliseum Oaks Home Owners Association
- Beth Keel
 - Jefferson Heights Neighborhood Association
- Cassandra Miller
 - Harvard Place/Eastlawn Neighborhood Association
- Chris Mongeon
 - Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association
- Christine Vina
 - VIA Metropolitan Transit
- Debra Guerrero
 - NRP Group
- Denise Gutierrez-Homer
 - Government Hill
- Ernest Flores
 - Government Hill
- Gregory Street
 - Community Member
- James Dickerson
 - Coliseum/Willow Park Neighborhood Association
- Jenness Gough
 - Texas Research and Technology Foundation
- Juan Garcia
 - Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association
- Judy Carmona
 - Alamodome Gardens Neighborhood Association
- Lacy Hampton
 - St. Phillip's College
- Lillie Webb
 - Jefferson Heights Neighborhood Association
- Lindsey Logan
 - San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside
- Liz Franklin
 - Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association
- Lulu Francois
 - Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association
- Mary Emerson
 - Harvard Place/Eastlawn Neighborhood Association
- Matthew Sirgo
 - Government Hill

- Michelle E. Garza
 - San Antonio River Authority
- Monica Savino
 - Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association
- Peter French
 - Community Member
- Randy Harig
 - Texas Research and Technology Foundation
- Rose Hill
 - Government Hill Alliance
- Salena Santibanez
 - Harvard Place/Eastlawn Neighborhood Association
- Suzanne Ervin
 - Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association
- Sylvia Lopez Gaona
 - Texas Research and Technology Foundation
- Tommy Calvert, Sr.
 - Neighborhoods 1st Alliance
- Tuesdae Knight
 - San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside
- Vincent Michael
 - San Antonio Conservation Society
- Will Covington
 - Coliseum/Willow Park Neighborhood Association

The Selection Process

Each of the SA Tomorrow sub-area plans was developed with regular input and participation from local residents, business owners, property owners, institutional representatives, and other key partners and stakeholders. In addition, a formal Planning Team was created for each sub-area that provided more frequent, in-depth, and consistent advice and guidance throughout the planning process. The composition of the Planning Team for each area is drawn from the representatives and stakeholders described above, and varies depending on the existing uses, assets, challenges and opportunities associated with each area. While the Eastside Community Area Plan Planning Team list does not include all who were invited to participate, it does include those who served as alternate and replacement representatives for participating organizations.

2 Existing Conditions

A History of the Eastside Area

The Eastside Community Area plan has multiple overlapping histories representative of its diverse communities.

The first modern settlers built homes in Government Hill, Dignowity Hill, and Denver Heights in the latter half of the 19th century, and initial subdivision platting, development, and associated infrastructure were built between the late 1800s through the 1940s. The first streetcar line serving the area was built around 1903, and by 1922 several streetcar routes served areas between downtown and beyond New Braunfels Avenue, on streets such as Austin, Grayson, Carson, Pine, Commerce, César Chávez Boulevard (Durango Boulevard at the time), and Porter Street. In the 1930s, the street car system was disassembled. The highest concentrations of new development and investment occurring in the area shifted from west to east between 1890 and the 1940s.

This era overlaps the period in which racially restrictive covenants prevented non-white people from owning property in portions of Dignowity Hill and Denver Heights, and the period of redlining from at least as far back as the 1930s to 1948, when the availability of loans was restricted from certain areas based on the area's racial composition. Most of the Eastside Community Area was identified on insurance risk maps, a primary tool for implementing redlining at the time, as a high risk area, meaning that loans for investing in the area were limited, or when available may have employed abusive terms. Since redlining and racially restrictive covenants were made illegal by the United States Supreme Court in 1948, racial and socioeconomic segregation have remained prominent issues in the plan area, due in part to continuing institutional practices at regional and national scales in the realms of development zoning, public education policy, housing policy, tax policy, and infrastructure spending priorities.

Portions of the Eastside Community Area include some of over 35 historic African American community enclaves in different parts of the City that figure prominently throughout and are inextricably linked to San Antonio's history. These places included vibrant business, religious, and civic places. Several important eastside institutions and landmarks such as St. Paul's United Methodist Church, St. Philip's College, the Carver Community Cultural Center Building, and several cemeteries, among many others, were led or initiated by African Americans. Prominent African Americans who resided in or led eastside organizations include Charles Bellinger, Valmo Bellinger, G.J. Sutton, Samuel Sutton, Rev. S.H. James, Artemisia Bowden, and John Grumbles among many others. San Antonio's African American history, including its eastside history is rich and complex. Responding in part to under-representation and misrepresentation of these histories, multiple organizations are working to re-discover and retell them, including but not limited to the San Antonio African American Community Archive and Museum and the Carver Community Cultural Center.

Interstate highways in and around the plan area were constructed between the 1950s and 1970s. During the same period, some streets, including portions of New Braunfels Avenue, were widened to accommodate greater volumes of automobiles. These projects improved mobility for automobile owners, but physically divided, and in some cases replaced, neighborhoods and local commercial and community assets. Regional interstate and road system expansion during the same period also facilitated the migration of investment capital and people away from inner neighborhoods to outlying areas of the city.

[See **Exhibit 1 – Existing Conditions Atlas**]

[See **Figure 1 – Plan Location Map**]

[See **Figure 2 – Study Area Map**]

Assets

Throughout the process of creating the Eastside Area Community Plan, Eastside stakeholders referred to the area’s history and culture as its primary assets. The Eastside Area includes places and physical characteristics that are uniquely connected to the area’s history and culture, that Eastsiders identify with, and that can be considered ingredients for a good quality of life for present and future generations. The gridded street network historically enabled residents to travel short distances to obtain goods and services close to home. Typical neighborhood development patterns and residential architectural styles, established prior to World War II, are not only subjectively appealing to Eastsiders, they have functional characteristics that support walking and engagement between neighbors.

Beyond these fundamentally important assets, the Eastside Area includes countless places, landmarks, and institutions that serve as reminders of history and that can assist in telling important stories about the past; they help maintain culture and identity. Many of these assets are referred to in other sections of the Eastside Area Community Plan, as they form the basis for making recommendations for a future that respects the past and builds on its strengths.

Challenges

Eastside residents on average have lower incomes, less education, and poorer health outcomes than San Antonio residents as a whole have on average. There are fewer employers, goods, and services located close to Eastside Area neighborhoods than in some other parts of the city. For several decades, public and private investment lagged behind other areas of the city, resulting in infrastructure that doesn’t reflect current aspirations, and more deterioration in homes and other buildings.

The supply of housing has not kept up with the number of people who want to live on the Eastside, leading to increasing property values, and challenging some residents’ ability to afford the costs of taxes, home maintenance, and rent. Growing economic opportunity for less educated or lower wage workers has not kept pace with the increasing costs of housing and transportation.

Opportunities

In the Eastside there are opportunities to leverage at least three primary assets toward achieving the plan’s Vision and Goals. In the Eastside Area more so than many other parts of San Antonio, there are opportunities to enhance transportation choices and the quality of local places for small businesses and pedestrians, leveraging the area’s dense interconnected network of streets and sidewalks. The Eastside has momentum toward achieving some long standing economic development and quality of life goals that this plan recommits to, and doing so in a way that draws inspiration from and pays respect to the area’s positive historical characteristics. There is a network of community organizations, from economic development groups, to neighborhoods associations, church congregations, and social service agencies that can affect more positive change in community placemaking, housing affordability, and the built environment. This plan includes recommendations that would empower more local organizations to contribute in these areas.

Sub-Area Plans and Existing Neighborhood and Community Plans

San Antonio is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own unique history, qualities and character. Many neighborhoods throughout the City have developed Neighborhood Plans that reflect local values and priorities. These plans, adopted by the City, have guided local investments and improvements for many years and helped strengthen the relationship between residents and the City. The City is currently in the process of creating Sub-Area Plans to implement the SA Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan. These Sub-Area Plans are intended to provide a more coordinated, efficient and effective structure for neighborhood planning. The Sub-Area Plans are intended to increase equity citywide, by ensuring that all of San Antonio's neighborhoods have a base level of policy guidance, as many neighborhoods within the City lack an existing Neighborhood Plan or a registered neighborhood organization. In this way, each Sub-Area Plan will integrate key elements of existing Neighborhood Plans for those neighborhoods that have a plan, while promoting citywide policy consistency and providing key recommendations and strategies for those neighborhoods currently lacking that direction. The Neighborhood Profile and Priorities section of the Sub-Area Plans provides special attention to prior neighborhood planning efforts and recognizes the community groups and individuals who were instrumental in their creation. They summarize specific opportunities, challenges, recommendations and priorities from each participating neighborhood, in an effort to more efficiently direct public and private investment within the City to help these neighborhoods achieve their short-term goals and long-term visions.

3 Vision and Goals

What is a Vision Statement?

A vision statement describes the desired state of a place in the future. With community support, an effective vision can influence decisions and inspire action to move toward that idealized future. Goals further describe the outcomes that will support the realization of the vision. These, in turn, are supported by more specific strategies and actions that will implement the bigger-picture vision and goals. These strategies will involve specific proposed projects, programs, policies, and other means of achieving the community vision.

The Eastside Area Vision and Goals were developed with input from residents, community stakeholders, and Planning Team members through an iterative process of developing and refining these concepts. During preliminary community engagement efforts and Planning Team meetings, community members and neighborhood representatives articulated important values and identified the Eastside Area's assets, challenges, and opportunities. This community input became the guiding principle for the Eastside Area Vision and Goals, which were refined with feedback from the Planning Team and participants at the second Community Meeting.

Establishing the Vision and Goals

The success of the SA Tomorrow Sub-Area Plans depends on broad participation from area stakeholders. To ensure this success, City Staff worked with a wide range of community members throughout the planning process for the Eastside Area. These included neighborhood associations, business and property owners, residents, employers, educational and cultural institutions, public and nonprofit organizations, and other City departments to create a realistic and implementable plan for the Eastside Area.

The planning process was designed to create a "feedback loop" between the City and the community as the plan was developed. This approach ensures that the Plan reflects community values and priorities. A variety of tools and techniques were used to ensure that those interested were well-informed about the Plan; encouraged to participate in a range of stimulating events and activities; and engaged in providing constructive feedback on a preferred future.

For each public input exercise, this document describes what was asked, how the input was presented back to the stakeholders, and how results were carried forward in further engagement exercises and eventually incorporated into the plan. Results from the exercises and surveys are available in the website Documents Library.

To facilitate public information and community participation, the Eastside Area Plan website was created and made available to the general public. Power Point presentations, meeting summaries and other materials were made available to the public on the website. The website includes a section for leaving comments which are sent directly to the project manager.

Below are descriptions of key exercises that were accomplished in order to draft and refine the Vision statement and set of goals for the future of the Eastside Area. Community feedback was gathered through two community meetings and two online questionnaires. The feedback from this community engagement was presented and discussed at four planning team meetings, where Planning Team members reviewed and refined drafts. Throughout the planning process, the vision and goals were

continually revisited to ensure recommendations, strategies, and other decisions were consistent with the long-term vision for this area.

Exercise 1: Assets, Challenges, Opportunities, and Vision Themes

In the second Planning Team meeting, the Planning Team discussed assets, challenges, and opportunities in the Eastside Area, and identified themes and values that would serve as the foundation for the draft vision and goals. Planning staff facilitated a discussion on the major themes so planning team members could openly discuss and share their ideas. The results of the discussion were recorded on large pieces of paper in front of the Planning Team.

During the first Eastside Area Community Meeting, attendees participated in an open house wall graphic exercise, identifying assets, challenges, opportunities, and potential vision and goal themes. Planning Staff explained the purpose of the exercise, actively invited attendees to write their ideas on the large paper, and also wrote out the ideas that attendees shared in discussion.

To provide an alternative to attending the Community Meeting, an online questionnaire was also available, inviting participants to identify assets, challenges, opportunities, and potential vision and goal themes. The questionnaire asked open-ended questions to residents and stakeholders about what elements of their community they like, dislike, want to change, or want to keep.

The Planning Department summarized the results of these activities, and posted the summaries to the “Documents Library” of the Eastside Area Community Plan website. Then, the Planning Department used this information to write the initial draft Eastside Area Vision and Goals.

Exercise 2: Develop Draft Vision and Goals

During Planning Team Meeting #3, the initial draft vision statement and goals were presented for discussion and refinement while considering comments that were provided by the broader public in the first Community Meeting and Vision and Goals online questionnaire.

The draft vision and goals were presented at the second Community Meeting on large sheets of paper, with instruction on how to use stickers and markers to suggest improvements or confirm agreement. Planning Department staff were positioned at this activity to encourage participation and discuss feedback.

The Planning Department also promoted an online questionnaire that shared the draft vision and goals and that asked residents and stakeholders whether they agreed or disagreed with the draft vision and goals. The questionnaire also encouraged participants to share longer comments.

The Planning Department summarized the results of these activities, and posted the summaries to the “Documents Library” of the Eastside Area Community Plan website. Then, the Planning Department used this information to improve the draft Eastside Area Vision and Goals.

Exercise 3: Review and Confirm Draft Vision and Goals

During Planning Team meetings #4 and #5, the Planning Team reviewed the revised draft vision and goals. The draft vision and goals were then posted to the plan website.

The results of the public visioning process are presented below. The vision and goals were referenced throughout the planning process to ensure key recommendations and strategies aligned with the long-term vision for the area.

Vision

Diverse communities of people will live, participate, and thrive together in Eastside neighborhoods. Places of historical and cultural heritage will be preserved and valued. More employment opportunities will be located in the area and available for local residents. Neighbors will feel comfortable, safe, and secure spending time outside, getting exercise, traveling, walking, and engaging with neighbors.

Goals

Goal 1: Community Stability and Inclusion

- Diverse housing options will be available for current and future generations.
- Residents will feel comfortable and able to afford to remain in their neighborhoods throughout all stages of life.
- Residents and businesses will maintain and enhance neighborhood character in order to provide stability to the area.
- Neighbors will feel safe and secure in their homes and out in the community.

Goal 2: Employment and Opportunity

- There will be more employment and entrepreneurial opportunities easily accessible by local residents in the Eastside Community Area.
- Negative side effects of economic growth, such as rental housing affordability issues will be proactively minimized and mitigated.

Goal 3: History, Culture, and Art

- The cultural landscape, comprised of buildings, business, public spaces, and natural features will be valued and preserved.

Goal 4: Gathering Places

- Public places will support interaction among people from diverse backgrounds.
- A complete and maintained network of sidewalks will provide easy access to public places.
- Diverse retail establishments and services will be available, including familiar and traditional businesses that are relevant to existing residents.

Goal 5: Connected Neighborhoods

- Basic infrastructure for walking, such as sidewalks, lighting, and trees will be complete and maintained.
- Additional infrastructure improvements will be of exemplary quality, supporting multiple community goals, including social interaction and health, complementing cultural assets, and enhancing transportation choices.

- Complete streets will make walking, bicycling, and riding transit safe, convenient, and comfortable.

Goal 6: Healthy Green Neighborhoods

- Residents will be connected to trails, parks, and other green spaces.
- Large canopy trees and green stormwater infrastructure will reduce the urban heat island, improve air and water quality, and enhance the health of the community.