

City of San Antonio



Minutes Planning and Community Development Committee

2023 – 2025 Council Members

Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4 Phyllis
Viagran, Dist. 3 | Teri Castillo, Dist. 5 Manny Pelaez,
Dist. 8 | John Courage, Dist. 9

Wednesday, November 6, 2024

10:00 AM

Council Briefing Room

The Planning and Community Development Council Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 10:00 AM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

Members Present: Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Chair*
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*,
Teri Castillo, *Member*
Manny Pelaez, *Member*
John Courage, *Member*

Members Absent: None

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the October 24, 2024 Planning and Community Development Committee Meeting

Councilmember Courage moved to Approve the minutes of the October 24, 2024 Planning and Community Development Committee meeting. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Courage
Absent: Viagran, Pelaez

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. Briefing and possible action on the draft Downtown Strategic Plan [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager]

Assistant City Manager Lori Houston introduced the Item and provided a background on the Plan which included new partnerships with Centro San Antonio (Centro) and Visit San Antonio (VSA) who both helped fund the Plan. Houston stated that the Plan needed community engagement, then a B Session, and finally culminate in the consideration of the Plan by City Council at an A Session.

President and Chief Executive Officer of VSA Marc Anderson mentioned that tomorrow was VSA's annual membership meeting. Anderson stated that the Plan was developed by consultants HR&A to ensure that residents and visitors felt at home in Downtown San Antonio. President and Chief Executive Officer of Centro Trish DeBerry noted that the face of Downtown was changing rapidly noting the growth of housing and activations of parks and other Downtown spaces. DeBerry introduced HR&A representative Thomas Simpson who made the presentation on the Center City Strategic Framework Update.

Simpson stated that the Downtown Strategic Framework was driven by analysis and stakeholder engagement focused on housing and economic development through a market and financial analysis, stakeholder and task force engagement, case studies, benchmarking, and a review of prior plans. Simpson described Downtown as a fabric of inclusive, connected, mixed-use neighborhoods that drew San Antonians and visitors to a thriving and sustainable center of culture, innovation, and urban living.

Simpson commented that Centro, the City, VSA, and local stakeholders envision an active and diverse Downtown that expanded on its current strengths to increase local participation, achieve a mixed-income environment with accessible options across the housing continuum, leverage investment in Downtown in support of other goals including sustainability, equity, and broader city success. Occupying less than 1% of the City's land area, Simpson stated that Downtown was an economic engine for all of San Antonio and he listed catalytic projects such as the new Downtown Baseball Stadium, Advanced Rapid Transit, San Pedro Creek Culture Park, the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Downtown Expansion, Hemisfair, and Velocity.

Simpson listed five key strategies for achieving the vision for Downtown: 1. Expand supply across the housing continuum, 2. Invigorate the public realm, 3. Curate local, culturally authentic retail, food, and beverage, 4. Build on anchor institutions and catalytic investments, such as UTSA's Downtown expansion, and 5. Broadcast Downtown's Value, Vision, & Identity Locally & Beyond. He stated that expansion of the housing supply would include options for retirees, downtown workers, and other working professionals, according to Simpson. He noted that these options would include deeply affordable, mixed-income and affordable, high-income, and first-time homeowners.

The City's strategy to boost housing Downtown had greatly increased supply, according to Simpson, but Downtown's housing stock would benefit from diversity serving a greater range of users. He noted that there was tougher competition for 100% Affordable Housing Funding sources due to higher land costs and more expensive parking typologies and he estimated that \$125,000 per unit of subsidies were needed for this type of housing. According to Simpson, cross-subsidization in mixed-income projects was less effective due to recent changes in various policy incentives making \$70,000 in subsidies per unit necessary. Additionally, Simpson stated that Downtown lacked resident-oriented amenities to drive demand and support pricing for denser, more expensive housing typologies. He indicated that land use and permitting obstacles increased costs and led to challenges for single-family homes. Simpson summarized that there were ways to attract market-rate and luxury housing that did not require City

subsidies, however, subsidies would be required for deeply affordable housing.

Simpson explained that Downtown boasted a rich network of parks and open spaces, with large events and activations centered around the River Walk and Alamo. However, there was inconsistency in quality and programming that discouraged park usage across Downtown. According to Simpson, high-quality amenities and open space activation attracted Downtown users, supported economic development, and increased residential demand. He added that improving consistency in quality and programming in the public realm would make Downtown a safe and exciting place to visit for all.

Simpson stated that there were opportunities to improve the public realm to activate gaps and expand Downtown's user base and recommended that the City make capital and programmatic improvements to spur new nodes of activity as bond projects were completed, leverage planned investment to ensure a public realm that served a variety of users, and program popular public spaces such as the River Walk to attract additional types of users.

Planning for and investment in public realm improvements should build on Downtown's strong foundation of open space and target specific challenges, stated Simpson. He recommended improved coordination and designated responsibility among entities to treat parks in Downtown as a network, including funding for operations and maintenance. He stated that consistent programming in parks and the public realm at different scales to regularly attract a variety of users was recommended as well as capital investment in existing public spaces and physical improvements to streetscape.

Simpson emphasized that curation of the local retail environment was needed to support small businesses and activate Downtown. He recommended that the City incentivize the buildout of ground floor storefronts for food, beverage, and retail to establish Downtown as a food and beverage destination, establish a strategic collaboration of public and private players to fill vacant storefronts and support local businesses, and employ creative use of open spaces for retail such as pop-up events and activations.

The City and Downtown leaders could ensure Catalytic Projects advance the public interest and serve as vehicles for other Downtown strategies, according to Simpson and he recommended leveraging public investment in catalytic projects to achieve policy goals such as using public land, funding, and financing to secure development agreements that created jobs, affordable housing, and fiscal impact. Simpson recommended aligning Catalytic Projects with Downtown's Other Strategies to make sure big projects did the little things well including proactively working with property owners and other partners to advance tailored public realm and retail strategies and enhance Downtown's identity and marketability. He recommended that the City convene stakeholders early and often in project conception to uncover synergies, coordinate project timelines, and encourage transparency.

Finally, Simpson recommended that the City broadcast Downtown's value, vision, and identity both locally and beyond. He noted that the City should communicate that Downtown was safe, accessible, and easy and exciting to explore. Simpson stated that marketing, communication, technology, and wayfinding Downtown could be improved. He concluded that the output of the process would be a Framework for Downtown built on the vision, goals, and strategies, with tactical recommendations for policies, programs, and projects that the City and its partners could plan and implement.

DISCUSSION:

Chair Rocha Garcia stated that Downtown belonged to every resident and recommended leveraging people coming in from other neighborhoods and the next housing bond as well as activation events to invigorate Downtown. Chair Rocha Garcia requested clarification on the Park Once concept. Simpson explained that people could park anywhere Downtown and walk successfully to any location. Chair Rocha Garcia recommended ensuring that the Strategic Framework complemented the Strategic Housing Implementation Plan (SHIP). Houston agreed and suggested more subsidies for deeply affordable housing Downtown.

Chair Rocha Garcia asked if HR&A assessed current apartment vacancy rates and recommended filling those vacancies over incentivizing new construction. HR&A stated that the Class A Multifamily Buildings in San Antonio were comparable to other cities' vacancy rates and explained that the uptick in vacancies was related to building of more housing but with more amenities residents would come. Chair Rocha Garcia cautioned against ignoring other parts of the City in favor of Downtown. She recommended aging-in-place options for Downtown, particularly for couples.

Councilmember Courage felt that housing was one of the most critical issues in the City and suggested more investment in deeply affordable housing Downtown as well as around the City. He advocated for a separate \$500 million bond program before 2027 targeting affordable housing noting the cost of \$125,000 in subsidies for each unit could add up quickly. Councilmember Courage commented on the traffic congestion, lack of public transportation options, and affordable parking Downtown for residents from his council district; suggesting we could bring in our own inner-tourism.

Councilmember Castillo recommended engaging with the American Federation of Musicians Local 23 and other Downtown workers for feedback. Councilmember Castillo noted that VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA) built its Downtown hub without significant input from the riders and essentially made rides longer. She also recommended a better connection with the SHIP related to preserving affordable housing stock surrounding downtown. She challenged that the Downtown Baseball Stadium Funds could have been used instead to subsidize affordable housing. Councilmember Castillo recommended a review of vacant commercial properties downtown. Simpson stated that data tended to be less reliable, but HR&A did have some data they could provide.

Councilmember Castillo asked how neighborhood investments were defined and whether they were basic infrastructure like water and sewer lines. Simpson stated that neighborhood investments included open spaces such as parks and retail storefronts. Councilmember Castillo recommended clarifying this to state community assets as people might think they mean burying electric lines or other utilities specifically for the units rather than for all to enjoy.

Chair Rocha Garcia recessed the meeting at 11:02 a.m. due to an emergency. Chair Rocha Garcia reconvened the meeting at 11:08 a.m. after the emergency had been resolved.

Councilmember Pelaez commented that Mexico City activated large portions of the parks for bicycles, walkers, and runners every Sunday targeting getting locals Downtown, and suggested that San Antonio's Ciclovía could be held on a regular basis rather than the once-a-year event. Councilmember Pelaez supported protection of San Antonio's authenticity and wanted to ensure that this was included in the Framework Plan in a bigger way and through careful curation. Councilmember Pelaez recommended

including economic development agencies such as GreaterSATX in the conversation even as a co-leader of the Plan. He cautioned against copying other cities. DeBerry stated that the program was equity lead and was about community building.

Councilmember Viagran recommended being intentional with the Plan to ensure that San Antonio kept its authentic identity. She suggested that bringing stakeholders together should include the largest employers in Downtown to study where their employees lived and what was keeping them from living Downtown as well as a survey of where they go to eat and what they would like. Councilmember Viagran stressed that affordable housing preservation was key but sometimes old buildings were too expensive to renovate.

Councilmember Pelaez recommended surveying residents that came Downtown in addition to those who did not. He noted that many people stated that they did not go Downtown due to transportation and parking but they refused to take VIA or other transportation rather than their own Ford F-150 Pickup trucks. DeBerry suggested hosting focus groups around the City to find out why they did or did not come Downtown. DeBerry added that Centro was developing a parking application that would help facilitate residents. Councilmember Pelaez suggested asking residents if they felt welcomed to Downtown.

Councilmember Courage recommended a downtown circulator that could move people Downtown at a low cost or free. He also supported filling in all the empty storefronts that seemed uninviting, particularly at night which could make the streets feel dark and unsafe.

Councilmember Courage suggested the creation of a planning and development council that brought together the City departments, the San Antonio Housing Trust (SAHT), the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT), the Alamo Area Mobility Coalition (AAMCO), Associated General Contractors (AGC), the Real Estate Council of San Antonio (RECSA), VIA Metropolitan Transit, CPS Energy, and San Antonio Water System (SAWS) as well as small businesses to ensure coordination of new development projects Downtown. DeBerry stated that the Lil Runner micro-mobility circulator vehicle was already running and had been expanded and Centro was focused on adding lighting.

Councilmember Castillo recommended engaging with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), City employees and Local Government Corporation Employees. She recommended more marketing of the Stone Oak Park & Ride which was generally empty as well as other VIA options. Councilmember Castillo supported plugging into community engagement initiatives that had already been conducted.

Councilmember Pelaez moved to forward the Plan to the full City Council following additional community engagement recommended by the Planning & Community Development Committee.

Councilmember Pelaez moved to Approve. Councilmember Courage seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, Viagran, Castillo, Pelaez, Courage

3. Briefing and status update on the Transit-Oriented Policy Framework and Update to the Transit-Oriented Development “TOD” Zoning District. [John Peterek, Interim Assistant City Manager; Catherine Hernandez, Director, Transportation Department]

Catherine Hernandez, Director of the Transportation Department, provided an overview of the San Antonio Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Policy Framework which began with the San Antonio Housing Commission and its two subcommittees: 1) Technical Working Group and 2) Removing Barriers. Additionally, the TOD Task Force recommended TOD Zoning Code updates. She stated that the Item was presented to City Council at B Session with feedback such as: protections for neighborhoods, concerns on traffic/parking provisions, the process for future corridors, and additional engagement with staff and the committees going to neighborhoods to help educate and reinforce the message of "No Rezoning."

Hernandez stated that the policy would ensure that existing residents could remain in their homes and communities by safeguarding affordable housing options against displacement and loss of affordability, especially the most vulnerable populations. She noted that schools could create issues within neighborhoods and Hernandez recommended that the section requiring schools (public and private) to submit a Traffic Circulation Study.

Hernandez described the process for future corridors and noted that two additional engagement meetings had been hosted since the B Sessions as well as other outreach. She indicated that the community expressed concerns of displacement from future developments, wanted to protect homeowners, provide more trees and walkability, more bike lanes, compatible mix of uses in residential areas, support for local businesses, promote missing middle housing along with TOD and integrate nature, enhance safety and fostering community ties to create more vibrant and livable neighborhoods.

The Planning Commission Technical Advisory Committee (PC-TAC) recommended approval excluding all single-family zoned lots with single-family uses within the CRAG from TOD zoning, and staff supported this recommendation according to Hernandez. She added that upon a property being rezoned to "TOD", a residential permit parking program was recommended to be evaluated for the abutting neighborhood.

Hernandez outlined the next steps in the approval process of the new TOD process which included a briefing to the Zoning Commission, the Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Adjustment, the Historic Design & Review Commission, and the Housing Commission with City Council consideration scheduled for December 15, 2025.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jack Finger described TOD as a land grab and argued that regular bus routes would be reduced resulting in increased traffic and lower VIA bus ridership.

Cosima Colvin, Member of the Tier One Neighborhood Coalition, opposed neighborhood displacement for TOD and supported the (PC-TAC) recommendations to exclude certain residential properties.

DISCUSSION:

Chair Rocha Garcia noted that there was significant concern with homeowners regarding protection of their homes but there was also a plan to build more affordable housing with access to public

transportation and VIAs Advanced Rapid Transit (ART).

Councilmember Castillo thanked staff for addressing traffic concerns near schools and wanted to ensure that it included not only public schools, but public charter schools, as well as private schools.

Councilmember Castillo appreciated the engagement process and inclusion of community feedback in the policy. She clarified that the Unified Development Code would be updated and the policy would apply to the East-West ART Corridor. Councilmember Castillo asked if TOD and Community Land Trusts were planned to be included in the 2027 Affordable Housing Bond. Director of Neighborhood Housing Services Department Veronica Garcia stated that they would likely recommend TOD but the community engagement process would need to be performed for the housing bond but bond funds were not eligible to support organizations, only the capital projects.

Councilmember Viagran stated that her constituents were concerned about impacts to their businesses and construction delays for those within the ART corridors and requested a meeting with these stakeholders.

Councilmember Pelaez requested clarification on the restrictions on auto repair shops in the TOD zoning district. Hernandez explained that auto repair uses were not encouraged in TODs because they were incompatible with TOD concepts of public transit and, therefore, were not permitted by right.

Chair Rocha Garcia noted that the Item was for briefing only, so no action was taken.

4. **Briefing and possible action related to the Council Consideration Request for establishment of a Pet Deposit Assistance Program.** [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Garcia, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services Department]

The Item was withdrawn.

Consent Agenda

5. **Resolution of No Objection for Sage Lofts, Ltd's application for 2025 or 2026 Non-Competitive 4% Housing Tax Credits (HTC) from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) for the construction of a 336-unit affordable multi-family rental housing development named Sage Lofts, located at approximately 7193 Old Talley Road in San Antonio's ETJ and allowing the construction of the development to be located within one linear mile or less from another development.** [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Garcia, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Councilmember Pelaez moved to Approve on the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Pelaez, Courage

Absent: Viagran

6. **Resolution of No Objection for Galm Apartments, Ltd's application for 2025 or 2026 Non-Competitive 4% Housing Tax Credits (HTC) from the Texas Department of Housing and**

Community Affairs (TDHCA) for the construction of a 324-unit affordable multi-family rental housing development named Galm Apartments, located at approximately 13380 W FM 471 in San Antonio's ETJ. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Garcia, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Councilmember Pelaez moved to Approve on the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Pelaez, Courage
Absent: Viagran

7. **Resolution of No Objection for Pedcor Investments-2024-CCVIII, LP's application for 2025 or 2026 Non-Competitive 4% Housing Tax Credits (HTC) from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) for the construction of a 312-unit affordable multi-family rental housing development named West Dell Apartment Homes, located at approximately 11400 Alamo Ranch Parkway in San Antonio's ETJ.** [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Garcia, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

8. Councilmember Pelaez moved to Approve on the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Pelaez, Courage
Absent: Viagran

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

Approved

Adriana Rocha Garcia, Chair

*Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk*