

**State of Texas**  
**County of Bexar**  
**City of San Antonio**



**Meeting Minutes**  
**City Council B Session**

City Hall Complex  
San Antonio, Texas 78205

**2021 – 2023 Council Members**

Mayor Ron Nirenberg

Mario Bravo, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2  
Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4  
Teri Castillo, Dist. 5 | Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6  
Ana Sandoval, Dist. 7 | Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8  
John Courage, Dist. 9 | Clayton Perry, Dist. 10

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**Wednesday, June 15, 2022**

**2:00 PM**

**Municipal Plaza Building**

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The City Council convened a regular meeting in the Norma S. Rodriguez Council Chamber in the Municipal Plaza Building beginning at 2:16 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

**PRESENT: 10** – Nirenberg, Pelaez, Courage, Bravo, Perry, McKee-Rodriguez, Rocha Garcia, Viagran, Castillo, Cabello Havrda

**ABSENT: 1** - Sandoval

**ITEMS**

1. Briefing on various development and public improvement projects within the downtown area. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; John Jacks, Director, Center City Development and Operations]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and Assistant City Manager Lori Houston who

presented background and a five-year forecast for improvements and development expected in the downtown area including housing, hotels, cultural amenities and street improvements. Assistant City Manager Houston described 58 projects valued at a total of \$3.3 billion and provided a map.

Mayor Nirenberg noted that this began with the decade of downtown and he requested a traffic study that would provide information on how the new development impacted traffic counts and the transportation system. Mayor Nirenberg noted that there needed to be a focus on multi-modal transportation, road diets, and better utilization of our institutions and assets such as the Institute of Texan Cultures (ITC) and the UTSA campus.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented on various projects including City Tower and the billions of both public and private dollars of investment in the downtown area but expressed concern that other parts of the City such as the Council District 2 Eastside neighborhoods lacked investment. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested the investment in downtown should reflect the needs of local residents and recommended developing a plan to ensure Eastside residents could access the downtown assets. Assistant City Manager Houston stated that she could provide data on participation of Eastside residents in events at HemisFair and other cultural agencies. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested that there needed to be more parking downtown and suggested free parking for City sponsored events.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that the US281 Highway cut off the Eastside from downtown and suggested working with the San Antonio African American Community and Archive Museum (SAACAM) to construct historical markers downtown celebrating the contributions of Black residents. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested a breakdown of the new housing units and their affordability rates. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested information on how much it really cost to live downtown and questioned the affordability of the downtown area and recommended the development of strategies that could make downtown affordable to local residents.

Councilmember Perry noted that he had requested that the presentation highlight the listed projects totalling \$3.3 billion for those either already under construction or planned within the next five years but requested historical investment numbers as well. Councilmember Perry requested the goals for Housing. Assistant City Manager Houston stated that the goal was to create 10,000 housing units downtown by 2020 and that goal was met so the new goal was to create 26,000 more affordable housing units citywide but near the regional or workforce centers.

Councilmember Perry requested a breakdown of the \$3.3 billion investment by funding sources and an update on the CPS Energy Building in La Villita. Councilmember Perry requested more details on the connection between Hemisfair, La Villita and the Alamo.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested a breakdown of the incentivized units that were considered affordable. Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested that there should be discussions about adaptive reuse of buildings that were now vacant due to remote working. Councilmember

Rocha Garcia recommended additional lighting for the stage at the Arneson Theatre and a focus on encouraging authenticity in our downtown cultural events and gastronomy designation.

Councilmember Viagran recommended more coordination with partners and expressed concern regarding the level of investment needed for older buildings and suggested that the City perform facility assessments of its older buildings to see how much investment was needed.

Assistant City Manager Houston stated that there was a toolkit for the different types of projects. Councilmember Viagran asked about Public Works coordination with the utilities. Razi Hosseini, Public Works Director, stated that the department always invited the utilities to upgrade their underground systems whenever streets were being reconstructed.

Councilmember Bravo agreed that a downtown traffic study was needed which could explore shutting down streets or changing from one-way to two-way streets to make downtown more accessible to multi-modal transportation. Councilmember Bravo requested a heat map of the City including investments showing the return of taxes generated. Councilmember Bravo recommended more public art on highway underpasses. Councilmember Bravo asked if the number of downtown City employees had changed due to people now remote working as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic and changes in work patterns.

Councilmember Castillo recommended a traffic study for the Lone Star Area in Council District 5 and suggested that there was an opportunity to get people to utilize alternative modes of transportation. Councilmember Castillo requested a breakdown of incentivized housing downtown including property tax abatements and when they would expire. Councilmember Castillo requested a breakdown of all the downtown investment by funding source both public and private. Councilmember Castillo recommended more incentivization for renovation and rehabilitation of buildings. Councilmember Castillo recommended increasing walkability and potentially utilizing public art to make areas more inviting. Councilmember Castillo suggested the conversation on TIRZ should begin with the TIRZ Board and not from the City Council as a directive.

Councilmember Courage commented that the ITC was located in the right location but was cut off from the rest of downtown by huge parking lots and had been neglected and not promoted for many years. Councilmember Courage recommended a bigger collaboration between the City and UTSA and reiterated that the ITC should stay in the Texas Pavilion. Councilmember Courage requested more detailed background on the affordable housing and commented on the scales used to determine affordability being still a large amount of money for most residents and stated that 80% AMI was out of reach for most residents. He advocated for 60% AMI.

Councilmember Perry requested a breakdown of the future costs and return on investment for the City on its past investments in downtown. Councilmember Perry commented that Tuesday was the one day of free downtown parking per week and parking was a barrier for residents to come downtown and suggested adding another free day. Councilmember Perry mentioned that all parts

of the City deserved to have an improved quality of life, in addition to downtown.

Councilmember Pelaez commented that the study of ITC was overdue and that moving it somewhere else should be considered with an open mind as to what was best for the community, noting that he would recommend moving it to a better location.

Councilmember Castillo advocated for an additional free downtown parking day and suggested that Thursdays should be considered to make the City Council meetings more accessible.

Mayor Nirenberg closed the discussion by thanking all the stakeholders and encouraged residents to imagine what could be possible while maintaining the unique culture and heritage of the City but that the “sky was the limit.”

2. Briefing on City’s Resiliency Plan development process and timeline. [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez who presented a definition of community resiliency and the purpose of a resiliency strategy. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that policy direction from the Mayor and the City Council was needed and there should be extensive community engagement. She recommended consulting resources to develop a resiliency strategy. Deputy City Manager Villagomez listed goals and priorities that already had City Strategic Plans which could be integrated into the City’s resiliency strategy. Deputy City Manager Villagomez provided the project timeline.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that he viewed human resilience to be based on two pillars: 1) Access to safe affordable housing; and 2) Economic mobility. Mayor Nirenberg commented that public health and equitable climate resilience should be addressed.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda stated that a community could not be resilient and informed until the most vulnerable residents were resilient and informed. Councilmember Cabello Havrda recommended that staff ensure a focus on including those stakeholder groups and providing access through transportation and other services. Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested that food instability should be included as well as needs during an emergency. Councilmember Cabello Havrda added that home resiliency was important and provided utility weatherization programs as an example.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested reviewing the Denver Resiliency Plan and their consultant as a model.

Councilmember Perry noted that the City had a lot of plans sitting on the shelf which could be incorporated into the resiliency strategy. Councilmember Perry wanted to ensure that large employers were also included in the stakeholder group discussion and recommended adding economic development and energy affordability as a part of the Resiliency Plan. Councilmember Perry stated that aging infrastructure, food insecurity, and public safety affected quality of life and

resiliency. Councilmember Perry described the Resiliency Plan as a living document that could be updated regularly.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended access to affordable housing, food stability, reduction of poverty, health outcomes, multi-modal transportation to be part of the resiliency strategy. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended that the Plan include detailed goals, strategies and specific outcome metrics with scheduled dates of attainment. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that permanent supportive housing was an important goal but that residents of Council District 2 wanted to see more investment in their neighborhoods so they could access quality of life improvements. City Manager Walsh stated that the resiliency study would not set targets but would identify resiliency priorities and the next step would be to address priorities and develop tangible targets. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern that priorities could change in the future and certain goals would be dropped. City Manager Walsh replied that priorities could change as we did not know what the future might hold. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested that we should work toward the goals of the current plans to be able to see more results quickly.

Mayor Nirenberg explained that over the past five years, the City Council had put a policy structure together to address community needs but the overarching Resiliency Plan would bring it all together to properly resource those areas already identified and to identify blind spots.

Councilmember Viagran recommended adding the Status of Women Report as a resource to be included in the Resiliency Plan as there were many women heads of households, especially widows, living in chronic poverty. Councilmember Viagran recommended adding mental health, specifically for youth, as a priority. Councilmember Viagran noted that the population was aging and needed to be considered. Councilmember Viagran wanted to ensure that the consultants were mindful of limitations based on State Laws.

Councilmember Pelaez stated that resiliency has always been his goal and resiliency needed an intentional study and plan to get the City to where it needed to be.

Councilmember Castillo listed drainage, flooding and housing as high priorities for Council District 5 residents and noted overlap between plans such as the Stormwater Plan and the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Councilmember Castillo recommended exploring home rehabilitation opportunities as well as programs to educate residents. Councilmember Castillo suggested a review of structures already completed along with the local stakeholder engagement and engagement of diverse residents. Councilmember Castillo requested a status report on the implementation of each existing strategic plan as well as a review of Bexar County initiatives.

Councilmember Bravo stated that lifting people out of poverty was key to people helping themselves and noted that there were stacked benefits. Councilmember Bravo recommended a focus on reducing heat islands, drainage needs, flooding worsened by climate change and addressing affordability of energy through energy efficiency. Councilmember Bravo expressed

concern regarding civil unrest that was based on the spread of false information. Councilmember Bravo noted that San Antonio was a hub where immigrants passed through and they should be considered.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

There was no Executive Session.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, Mayor Nirenberg adjourned the meeting at 4:24 PM

**Approved**

**Ron Nirenberg  
Mayor**

By:

**Debbie Racca-Sittre  
City Clerk**