



MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting: Midtown Planning Team Meeting #5

Date: December 5, 2017

Time: 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Location: Witte Museum, Memorial Room

Midtown Planning Team Attendees:

Homer Hayes, Mahncke Park NA

Leticia Riley, Westfort Alliance

Abe Juarez, Five Points NA

Mike Austin, Tobin Hill CA

Marise McDermott, Witte Museum

Richard Farias, SA College

Armando Saliba, University of the

Incarinate Word

Jason Rodriguez, VIA

Jeanette Honermann

Max Woodward, FRED + Uptown NA

Bill Shown, Tobin Hill/Pearl

Timothy Cone, NRP Group

Lynn Bobbitt, Brackenridge Park

Meeting Purpose

The fifth meeting of the Midtown Planning Team aimed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Review input from the November 15th Community Meeting;
- Consider catalytic sites; and
- Review and discuss housing and economic development issues and strategies.

Meeting Format

Garrett Phillips, City of San Antonio Project Manager for the SA Tomorrow Midtown Regional Center Area Plan Project, provided an update on the planning process and recent community engagement, and facilitated a discussion on catalytic sites. Next, Economic and Planning Systems' Mathew Prosser presented on housing and economic development issues, opportunities and potential tools. The discussion was facilitated intermittently throughout the presentation.

This summary provides highlights of the meeting discussion and a review of next steps in the planning process. The main summary sections include:

- Catalytic Sites;
- Housing;
- Economic Development; and
- Next Steps.

Catalytic Sites

Following are highlights from the Planning Team’s discussion on potential catalytic sites (also see wallgraphic and map notes at the end of this summary).

- San Pedro from I-35 to San Antonio College should be examined as a whole.
- The area south of Crockett Park has mixed use redevelopment potential, however there are substantial obstacles; Midtown Planning resources would be more effective at catalyzing change if they were focused on San Pedro Avenue and around the VIA property.
- There were mixed feelings about including the VIA properties as a catalytic site.
 - The site could accommodate lots of people, jobs, and amenities, including San Pedro Springs Creek and a connection to San Pedro Springs Park. It may be the largest publicly owned property in the inner city that is conceivably redevelopable, so it’s an opportunity to create a development that is very responsive to city and community values.
 - Relocating VIA’s facilities is only a remote possibility rather than a probability, so it may be more strategic for the Planning Team to focus attention on catalytic sites in the blocks and properties surrounding the VIA properties.
 - If the VIA property is identified as a Midtown catalytic site, the Plan should focus on: phasing and strategies that enable surrounding properties to redevelop first; and a multi-phased approach to enable a natural evolution and relocation of VIA operations.

Housing

Following are highlights from the Planning Team’s discussion on housing (also see wallgraphic notes at the end of this summary).

- The PowerPoint presentation identified housing objectives to reaffirm portions of the Midtown Vision and Goals that relate to housing; Planning Team members did not raise specific objections to these objectives.
- There was discussion around whether new housing that fits within the character of neighborhoods (such as new single family homes, new townhomes, and new “plexes” that look like homes) can be affordable in the Midtown market. Expectations for new small-scale affordable housing need to be realistic and any new housing encouraged within neighborhoods should be careful and deliberate.
- In Mahncke Park, existing affordable housing in house-like plexes that fit in the aesthetic character of the neighborhood have been torn down and replaced with expensive single family homes that are out of character with the neighborhood. The loss of people, human diversity, and physical character are negative outcomes that all need to be avoided in the future.



- In Five Points, house-like plexes that are nonconforming with zoning and building codes do not have a feasible path to conformity because the City's future land use map only supports lower density zoning. As a result, affordable rental housing is being lost as the City and utility providers require corrections by the property owner.
- House-like plexes in neighborhoods are an important part of the existing affordable housing stock and neighborhood character; the buildings, the number of units they provide, and affordability for renters should be intentionally protected.
- The City cannot control all housing outcomes and solutions, so it should consider how to: avoid inhibiting the creativity of the market; and encourage property owners to create and maintain housing. For example, very small rental units of 200 to 300 square feet are desirable and affordable to some renters, but may not be allowed.
- Zoning code parking requirements add to housing costs and limit the number of units that can be creatively accommodated on a site or in a building.
- There is a substantial amount of affordable housing in neighborhoods that should remain affordable, instead of allowing it to turn over into expensive housing. This is a distinct and important objective that is separate from the goal to create new affordable multifamily housing.
- Although affordability is valued everywhere in Midtown, new low-income or very low-income housing is already concentrated in some places, including Villa Tranchese, College Park, Parkview, and other developments immediately west of Five points across I-10. Additional concentration of lowest income housing in these areas should be avoided.
- Multiple coordinated tools will be needed to preserve and produce affordable housing and diverse housing types that fit with local character in Midtown. These will have to involve multiple tools to address neighborhood housing, such as single family homes and four-plexes.
- Most tools require the application of capital. Private market capital demands return on investment at higher rates and shorter terms than would be useful in Midtown for affordable housing. Alternative sources of local capital will be needed.



Economic Development

Following are highlights from the Planning Team's discussion on economic development (also see wallgraphic notes at the end of this summary).

- After a presentation of potential economic strengths, opportunities, and tools, the Planning Team affirmed core opportunities including health and culture oriented districts, and maintaining the industrial employment area.
- The Team emphasized that together Midtown's amenities and opportunities are more than the sum of their parts. There is room for Midtown to further develop/expand existing strengths related to: culinary innovation, urban nature, downtown connections, and cool unique places.
- Important economic opportunities involve: physically connecting existing assets/amenities, creating a cohesive and recognizable identity for these assets/amenities, and coordinating planning and programming resources to maximize benefits.
- An entity to coordinate shared investments would be useful; further, this type of entity could help create some coordinated identity over time. A Midtown corollary to Centro might be appropriate, even without a "Public Improvement District." Participants discussed that Midtown has sufficient opportunities, quality amenities, and a strong enough role in San Antonio's future to warrant this kind of effort. The Planning Team considered whether Midtown Plan Area geography as a whole would be an appropriate geography for such an entity to cover, given differences across the Plan area.
- Major public improvements that could catalyze economic development in the western portion of the Midtown area include: high-capacity transit and/or major streetscape improvements on San Pedro Avenue, and public access improvements to San Pedro Springs Creek near the Five Points intersection
- The tendency for Midtown property owners to hold out for anticipated lucrative sales in the future can be a barrier to retail development, creates multiple vacancies, and prevents vibrant street areas. Zoning and vacant building ordinance tools might be effective responses.
- Entrepreneur overlay zoning might be an effective tool for supporting existing and new small businesses in Midtown.

Next Steps

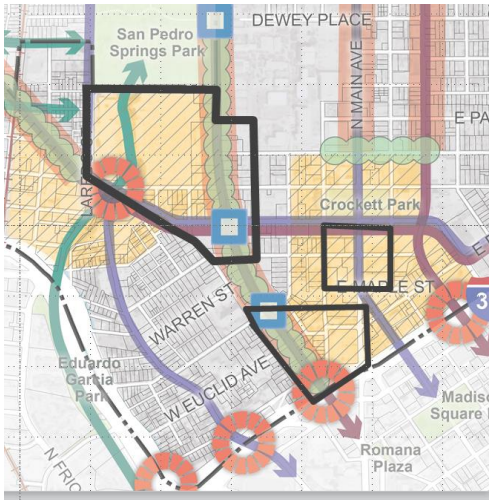
The sixth Planning Team Meeting will be held in 2018. A preliminary objective for this meeting will be to solicit input on Midtown's future land use policy.

If you have questions about Midtown Regional Center Sub-Area planning, please contact Project Manager Garrett Phillips, City of San Antonio Planning Department.

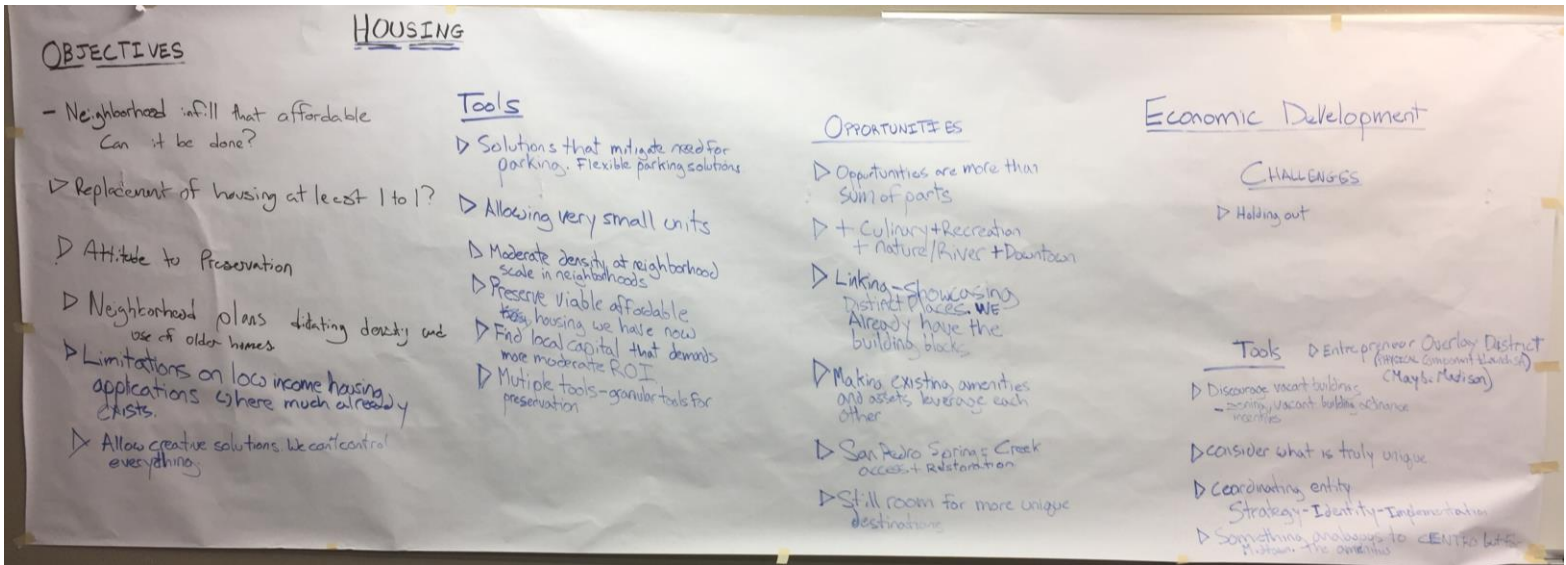
Email: garrett.phillips@sanantonio.gov

Phone: (210) 207-5441





Potential Catalytic Sites (in black) contemplated at Planning Team Meeting #5



Housing and Economic Development discussion notes at Plan Team Meeting #5