



## MEETING SUMMARY

**Meeting:** Midtown Community Meeting #1  
**Date:** August 23, 2017  
**Time:** 6:30 – 9:00 pm  
**Location:** St. Ann's Parish Center and Gymnasium

### MEETING OVERVIEW

The City of San Antonio Planning Department kicked off the first Midtown Area Plan Community Meeting with the following main objectives:

- Introduce the Midtown Regional Center planning process
- Review initial existing conditions findings
- Map Midtown's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- Identify a vision and goals
- Learn about further opportunities to get involved in planning for Midtown

Approximately 40 stakeholders attended the meeting to offer their ideas and perspectives. Community input from this meeting, along with additional feedback from the Midtown Planning Team, intercept events, and video vision clips, will be used to create a vision and goals for the future of Midtown. Public input and technical analyses will also inform the more detailed parts of the Plan in the coming months.

### Meeting Format

Participants were invited to enjoy refreshments and view an Open House gallery of exhibits and activities either before or after the main presentation and group discussions. The meeting was organized into four main parts:

- I. Open House: 30 minutes
- II. Presentation: 30 minutes
- III. Group Discussions: 60 minutes
- IV. Open House: 30 minutes

### Open House

The Open House portion of the meeting included a gallery of existing conditions maps on large poster boards and a resource table with copies of the SA Tomorrow Plans and neighborhood plans. Participants were invited to: identify any corrections to the existing conditions maps using sticky notes, and mark on a map their common destinations and the vicinity of where they live. Participants were also encouraged to create a 30-second video recording of their favorite Midtown memory or a vision for the future of Midtown. These video contributions will be used to inform the Midtown visioning work. They may also be shared on the project website or in future presentations.

### ***Presentation***

MIG, Inc. Principal Jay Renkens and City of San Antonio Project Manager Garrett Phillips provided background on the SA Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan that was adopted by the City in 2016, reviewed what we know about existing conditions in Midtown, and described the process for creating the Midtown Area Plan. Following the formal presentation, meeting participants broke into six groups for smaller focused discussions.

### ***Group Discussions***

Project Team members from City of San Antonio Planning Department and the consulting team MIG, Inc. led small group discussions with participants gathered around tables with maps of the Midtown Plan Area. The group discussions were divided into three main parts. In Part 1, participants used a map, color-coded stickers, and sticky notes to discuss and document strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the Midtown Plan Area. In Part 2, participants discussed their vision for the future of the Midtown Plan area using a facilitated writing and discussion activity. Project Team leaders documented discussion points on a large sheet of paper on the wall. In Part 3, participants distilled their main ideas onto a “Madlib” style summary worksheet. Then, one representative from each small group shared discussion highlights aloud to the larger Community Meeting audience.

### **DISCUSSION SUMMARY**

Following is a summary of comments compiled from notes recorded during the six group discussions. Photographs of each group’s marked-up map, wallgraphic sheet, and discussion highlights worksheet are included at the end of this meeting summary.

#### **Part 1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)**

Using a map of the Midtown Plan Area as a starting point for discussion, participants identified the area’s primary strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

#### ***Strengths***

- A diverse population
- An eclectic mix of places with unique identities
- Historic grid street network
- Relatively human-scaled environment
- Great parks and natural places
- Museums and historical resources
- Churches and faith community resources
- Schools and post-secondary education choices
- Existing housing that is diverse and affordable
- The presence of a major hospital
- San Antonio’s primary LGBTQ restaurant and retail area
- Convenient access to interstate highways

#### ***Weaknesses***

- Primary transportation corridors with underused land and buildings that could have a greater and more vibrant mix of amenities and places to live



- A pedestrian network that is deteriorated, disconnected, unsafe, and uncomfortable in many places
- Interstate highways that lack pedestrian crossings, segregate the City, and detract from the vibrancy of surrounding areas

### ***Opportunities***

- Maintain what is valued in neighborhoods while accommodating growth in neighborhoods and on corridors with careful consideration of compatibility, e.g., through thoughtful commercial and residential transitions
- Transform vacant properties and buildings
- Integrate small neighborhood-oriented open space such as:
  - A dog play area in Mahncke Park
  - A playground in Uptown for children who cannot cross Fred Road to use San Pedro Springs Park
- Improve pedestrian networks in western portions of the Plan Area through:
  - Roadway and pedestrian safety improvements
  - Connections to neighborhoods isolated by highways, busy roadways, or other barriers
  - River-oriented trails (San Pedro Springs Creek)
  - Rail alignments
  - Abandoned pedestrian bridges
- Expand reliable transit service
- Make multimodal options more viable by improving safety, comfort, and interconnectivity of the transportation network
- Improve east-west connectivity for multiple modes across the entire Plan Area and west of the Plan Area to Martinez Creek and Zarzamora
- Provide more east-to west bicycle connections between San Pedro Springs Park and the San Antonio River
- Enhance green stormwater management and community greening
- Encourage clean air, clean water, street trees, and create a public environment that makes people want to walk

### ***Threats***

- Concern over potential negative impacts due to growth
  - Less affordable and less diverse housing and amenities
  - Loss of population diversity
  - Increases in parking and traffic congestion
  - Impacts to neighborhood character and historic resources

## **Part 2: Vision Themes**

Participants shared the following aspirations for the future of Midtown.

**Group 1** envisioned a future for Midtown with...**recreation spaces and open space** close to home and accessible by children; a safe and **comfortable pedestrian environment** with shade by day and lighting by night; **healthy food options** available close to home; **affordable well-maintained homes**; and **higher density housing options** in places that are currently vacant or underused.



**Group 2** envisioned a future for Midtown with...a **mix of uses**; **housing** that is **affordable** and **well maintained**; strong **pedestrian connections**; multiple **options for getting around**; evident and honored **historic character**; **recreation opportunities**; and plentiful **educational and employment opportunities**.

**Group 3** envisioned a future for Midtown where...**residences** are close and **connected to centers of community activity**; **history and heritage** are preserved and remembered; **single family housing** options are available; there are great **parks and open spaces**; it is **safe and comfortable to bike and walk**; and employers, business, and residents share a **common sense of purpose** for the future.

**Group 4** envisioned a future for Midtown where...the full **diversity and eclectic mix of people** that reside in Midtown today is retained and further expanded as the population grows; today's multiple coexisting **community identities are preserved** and will flourish; the character is **casual, welcoming, green, and urban**; the area is a **destination** for San Antonians and visitors, and also provides most of the **amenities and services needed by local residents**; and the existing **neighborhood character is retained and celebrated**, but as the number of households increases there should be **new affordable housing options** for every demographic group.

**Group 5** envisioned a future for Midtown as a **magnet for education, arts, culture, and entertainment** and a place with...**diverse population**; **affordable housing choices** with today's housing also serving an important part of the future housing stock; **streets and public spaces that make it easier be healthy** with more nearby destinations, comfortable places to walk, a second greenway trail on San Pedro Springs Creek, and **reliable transit service**; and a **housing and amenity-rich environment** including a grocery store and other amenities to serve those who live in Midtown.

**Group 6** envisioned a future for Midtown as a **thriving diverse community** with...**vibrant affordable housing** options; **renovated and well-maintained buildings**; **beautified and well-maintained streets and parks** with public art, trees, lighting (LED), roadway improvements; convenient **choices for moving around** including **safe and well-connected** pedestrian and bicycle routes and **reliable transit**; **clean air and water**; **transformed vacant properties and buildings**; **vibrant local businesses and amenities** on transportation corridors that contribute to a distinct **sense of community** and support **safety and comfort for pedestrians**; and people who live in and care about Midtown continuing to be **actively engaged** in shaping its future.

### **Part 3: Small Group Discussion Highlights**

The purpose of the fill-in-the-blank "Madlibs" style summary worksheet activity was for each small group to identify the most notable themes from the SWOT and vision discussions to share with the larger group of Community Meeting participants. The worksheet prompted each group to identify the three most significant opportunities for the Plan Area, the greatest threat to taking advantage of those opportunities, and the group's top vision and goal priorities. In general, the responses conveyed a range of ideas for making improvements to the Midtown Area, and also concern about how growth could impact neighborhood character and existing residents.



The **vision and goal priorities** are articulated in the previous “Part II: Vision Themes” section. A particularly strong common theme that emerged is **a future for Midtown with a diverse population and diverse and affordable housing**.

Significant opportunities noted by the groups have been folded into the “Part I: SWOT” discussion under the “Opportunities” heading above. Some examples of participants’ **priority opportunities** for Midtown include:

- Neighborhood character preservation
- Making use of existing buildings
- Focusing growth on primary transportation corridors
- Making the transportation system more multimodal and safer for pedestrians
- Improving neighborhood connections to open space and amenities
- Seeking inspiration from Mexican and Latin American examples of great public spaces when designing parks, plazas and streets

Participants identified the following **threats** to achieving the opportunities noted during the small group activity:

- Conflicting priorities and resistance to change
- Parking requirements
- Greed and individualism
- Incompatible development
- Policies that support developers more than neighborhoods
- Lack of affordability/gentrification
- Thoughtless development

### NEXT STEPS

The City Planning Department will use the public’s input from Community Meeting #1, along with input generated from intercepts, focus groups, interviews, and the Midtown Planning Team, to draft a vision for the Midtown Plan Area. The Vision will be used to guide more detailed plan recommendations that we will create in the coming months.

- The second Community Meeting will be held in November 2017. Objectives for this meeting will include: Review the emerging Midtown Plan Area vision and goals
- Gather input to inform more detailed plan recommendations
- Provide more information on how the Midtown Plan is being created and further opportunities to get involved

If you have questions about the Midtown planning project, please contact Project Manager Garrett Phillips, City of San Antonio Planning Department.

Email: [garrett.phillips@sanantonio.gov](mailto:garrett.phillips@sanantonio.gov) Phone: (210) 207-5441

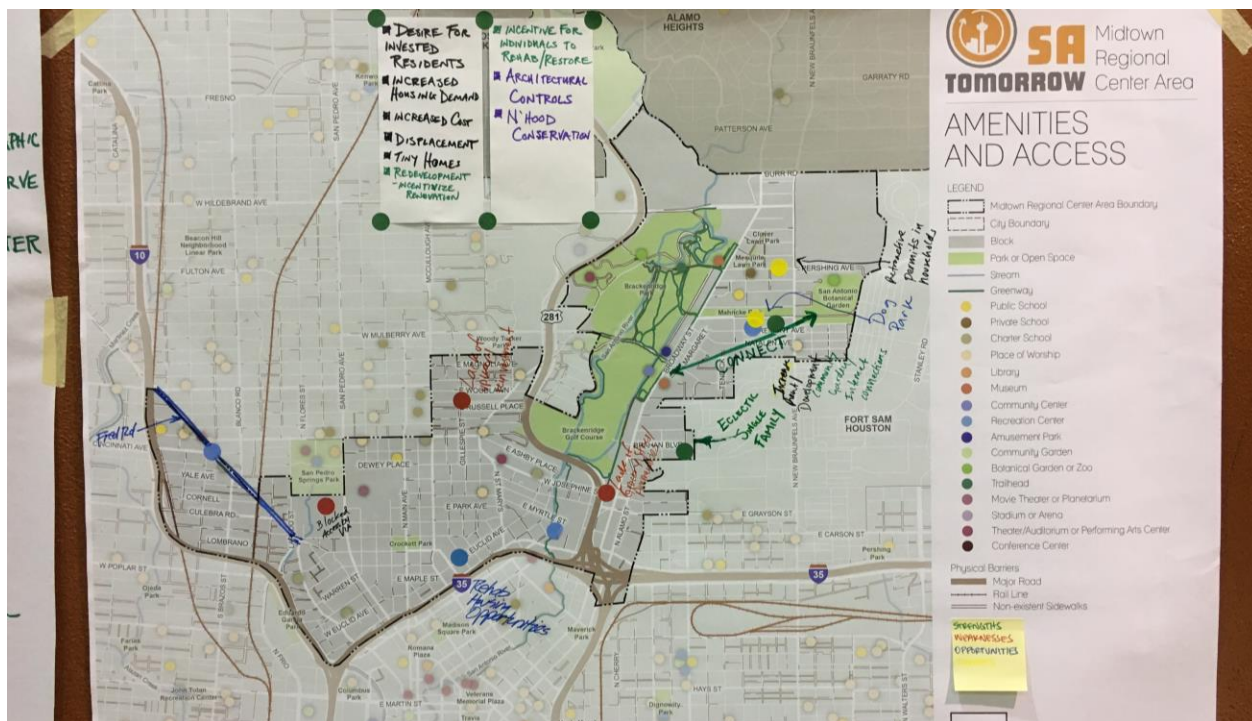
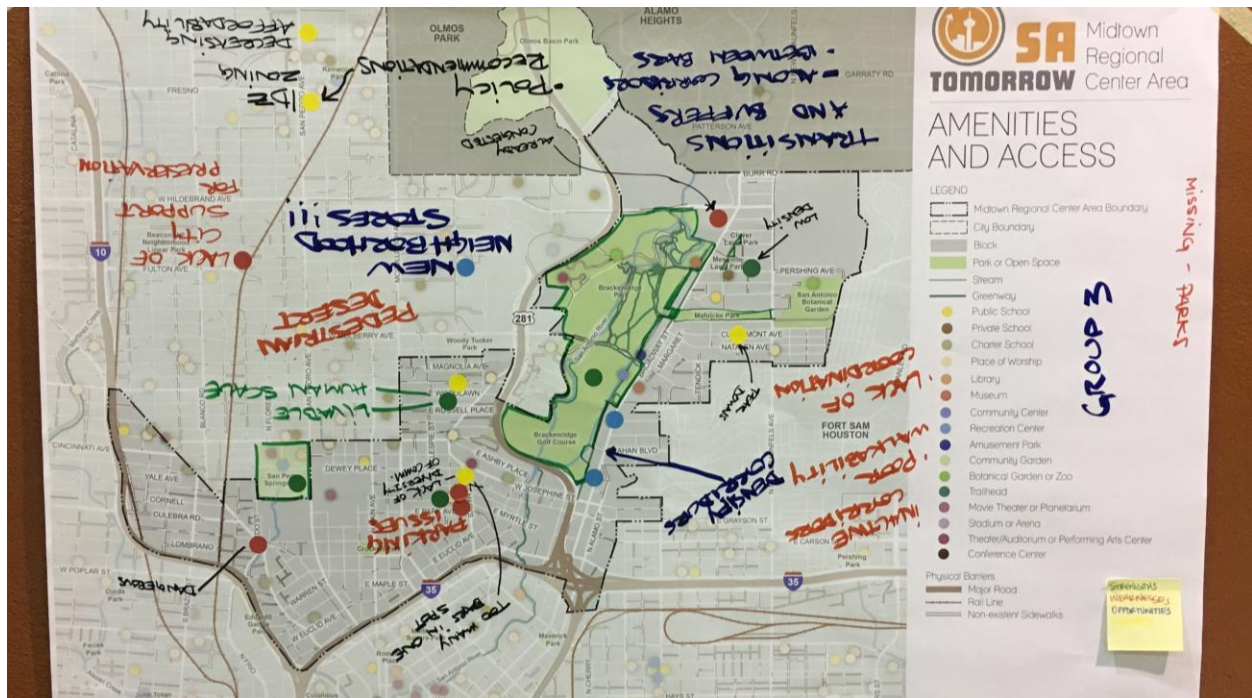




## SWOT Discussion Results

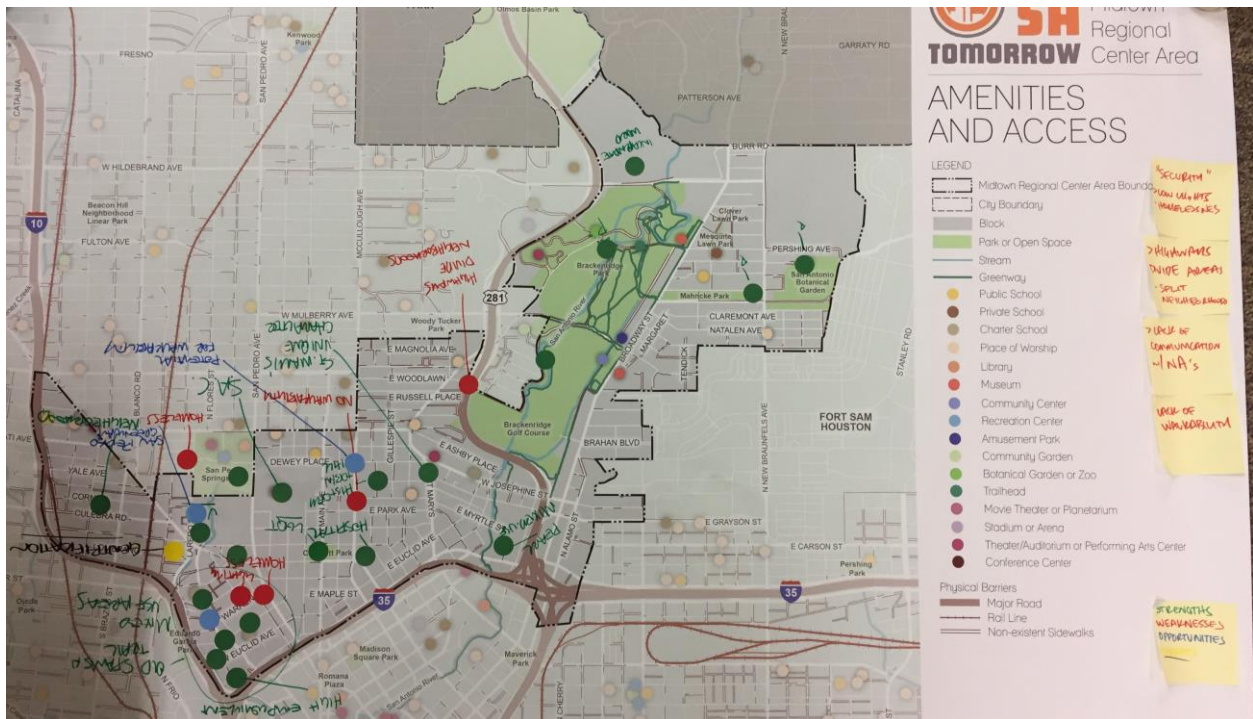


## Midtown Community Meeting #1 Summary





# Midtown Community Meeting #1 Summary





## Vision Themes Results

