



neighborhood

Profile and Priorities

DOWNTOWN AREA REGIONAL CENTER PLAN:
DIGNOWITY HILL

Acknowledgements

Special Thanks to every Downtown resident and stakeholder who spent time and energy speaking with Planning Department staff throughout the Downtown planning process and to the numerous area residents and stakeholders who contributed to this document by meeting with the Planning Department.

Neighborhood Profile and Priorities



What is the Neighborhood Profile and Priorities?

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.

How was it developed?

At the outset of the planning process, City of San Antonio planning staff reviewed existing Neighborhood Plans that had a shared geography with the Downtown Plan. Each relevant plan was summarized so that staff would have a sound understanding of neighborhood issues and priorities from the time that each plan was created.

The Neighborhood Profiles and Priorities were created using input from neighborhood residents throughout the Downtown planning process. The Planning Department used input from small group conversations, stakeholder interviews, community meetings, planning team meetings and facilitated conversations in neighborhood association meetings.

Planning staff revisited the Neighborhood Plans to identify major projects, programs or other efforts that had been achieved, and those that have yet to be implemented, so they could be reprioritized in this effort. City planning staff met with members of each original neighborhood plan advisory team and current neighborhood association boards (listed on the Acknowledgements page of this document) to help create this Neighborhood Profiles and Priorities document and provide lasting direction in partnership with each neighborhood.

Neighborhood Snapshot

NEIGHBORHOOD STRENGTHS AND CHARACTER



Within the Downtown Area Regional Center Plan, the Dignowity Hill Neighborhood consists almost entirely of warehouses or industrial land uses located at the base of the hill from which the area's name is derived. This industrial character is facilitated by the Del Rio Subdivision of the Union Pacific Railroad which bisects the area completely from north to south. Several significant community landmarks are located within this area, such as the Healy-Murphy Center, Healy-Murphy Park, the Hays Street Bridge, and Ellis Alley. Within the last several years, new development in this area has created new homes and businesses, increasing the population and drawing visitors to this area just east of the traditional Downtown core.



The majority of the Dignowity Hill Neighborhood, including the traditional residential areas and the Dignowity Hill Historic District, parks, cemeteries, and other important places will be included in the SA Tomorrow Eastside Community Area Plan in future years. Accordingly, the Neighborhood Profile and Priorities for Dignowity Hill in the Downtown Area Regional Center Plan has a limited scope and is focused on the area that is inside of the Downtown Area Regional Center Plan. A more comprehensive Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Profile and Priorities section will be included in the Eastside Community Area Plan.

Strengths



This area is located immediately east of the traditional Downtown area and is well connected to the east and west.



The industrial area of western Dignowity Hill has large tracts of land, often entire blocks, under common ownership.



A number of community landmarks and historic resources are present within this area of Dignowity Hill.

Neighborhood Snapshot

NEIGHBORHOOD OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Opportunities

- Redevelopment of vacant and industrial land can be leveraged to create a safer and more comfortable street environment.
- Restoration and adaptive reuse of historic industrial buildings such as Merchant's Ice House and the G.J. Sutton Building can create new places for people to live, work, and find entertainment while preserving aspects of the area's history.
- There is vacant and underutilized land that can be used to add to the housing supply without directly displacing existing housing in the neighborhood.
- Land banking could be employed to acquire vacant sites to be redeveloped for affordable housing.

Challenges

- The Union Pacific Railroad tracks bisect the area and present a challenge to all modes of travel and the noise generated by rail traffic is detrimental to the quality of life for existing and future residents of this area.
- As the warehouse and industrial area is redeveloped, maintaining a supply of affordable housing will be a challenge as more people choose to live near Downtown San Antonio.
- The connectivity with the Downtown area west of IH-37 is challenged by the obstacle of the elevated interstate and unwelcoming conditions beneath it.
- An absence of sidewalks and bike infrastructure creates an unsafe and unwelcoming environment for pedestrians and people on bicycles.

Previous Neighborhood Plans

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS



The 2009 Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Plan and Eastside Reinvestment Plan recommended that the industrial and warehousing uses between IH-37 and Cherry Street transition to high-density mixed-use similar to what is found downtown. The neighborhood plan also called for infill housing that supports the character of the neighborhood and

provides housing choices that appeal to all income ranges and household sizes. The neighborhood plan emphasized a well-maintained and attractive neighborhood and recommended housing restoration assistance and a “rehabarama” program to encourage the rehabilitation of existing housing, primarily aimed at the traditional residential area east of Cherry Street.

DIGNOWITY HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



Prepared in Coordination with the Residents and Property Owners of the Dignowity Hill Neighborhood in Partnership with the City of San Antonio Planning and Development Services Department and the Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association

December 3, 2009

The Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Plan called for expanding neighborhood serving businesses that are convenient, safe, and easily accessible to residents and visitors. Creating safe connections for pedestrians and people riding bicycles, streetscape improvements including trees and landscaping, and improving sidewalk conditions were recommended to connect people to residential, commercial, and recreation areas within the neighborhood.

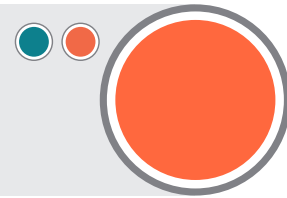
MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

- The restoration of the Hays Street Bridge and the addition of a pedestrian and bicycle path.
- Street and sidewalk improvements along Cherry Street.
- Several significant redevelopments have been built or are in the planning stage, converting vacant and industrial land to mixed-income housing and research institutions.

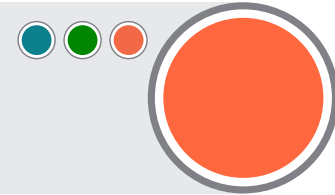
Neighborhood Priorities



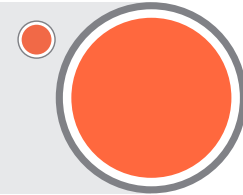
- Development near Cherry Street should decrease in height and massing from west to east, transitioning to the residential area east of Cherry Street.



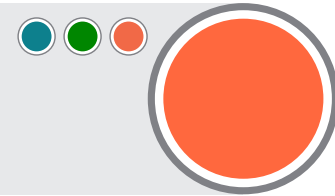
- Conserve buildings that contribute to the essential neighborhood character. Rehabilitate and reuse deteriorated industrial buildings.






- Encourage the formation of an innovation district in the areas generally between Dawson Street and Commerce Street by attracting a diverse population of new residents and innovation-oriented businesses and institutions.



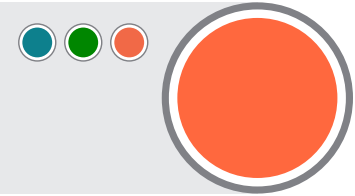
- Transition the area into a high density mixed-use district (from Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Plan).



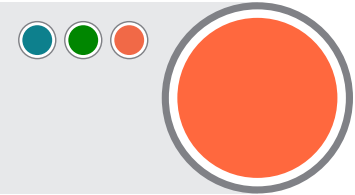
-  Priority from Previous Neighborhood Plan
-  Aligns with Sub-Area Plan Recommendation
-  Aligns with other Neighborhood Action Plan Recommendation

Neighborhood Priorities

- Increase the quality and quantity of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure such as wide sidewalks, street trees and landscaping, buffered bike lanes, and bike boxes. Improve the pedestrian environment by creating safe, attractive, and functional streetscapes.



- Implement context sensitive lighting improvements and other walkability improvements throughout the neighborhood to create a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians as well as motorists. Artistically illuminate the highway underpasses.



- See the Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Plan (2009), and multiple sections of the Downtown Area Regional Center Plan for additional information and policy recommendations related to the Dignowity Hill neighborhood.

