



# neighborhood

## Profile and Priorities

DOWNTOWN AREA REGIONAL CENTER PLAN:  
LAVACA

## 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.





**SA** Tomorrow  
Downtown Regional Center Area

## NEIGHBORHOOD LOCATION

### LEGEND

- Downtown Regional Center Area Boundary
- Parcels
- Neighborhood Association





## 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



Lavaca is one of the oldest residential areas in San Antonio, established in the early 1870s, primarily by working class families. The area was originally part of the Labor de Afuera, the farmlands of Mission San Antonio de Valero (the Alamo) watered by the Acequia Madre. Several styles of vernacular homes from the Spanish era, the turn-of-the-century era, and more modern early twentieth-century bungalows, as well as a commercial strip consisting of one and two-story commercial buildings along the western boundary of the area, survive today and give the neighborhood its unique character.



In the past 20 years, Lavaca has seen changes in who is living in the neighborhood and how they are living. Perhaps the most significant change was the demolition and subsequent redevelopment of the Victoria Courts apartments, a 1940's public housing project now being used for mixed-income apartments, townhomes, and single-family dwellings.

### Strengths



There is a diverse mix of places to live as renters or owners, including single family homes, apartments, and townhomes. There is also public housing for seniors and people with disabilities.



Lavaca is a comparatively "complete neighborhood," including relatively high quality transit service and restaurants for diverse tastes.



There is an abundance of arts, cultural, and culinary establishments within easy walking distance.



The Lavaca neighborhood provides opportunities to live in a place that is both mature and historic, while also vibrant and evolving, with a growing number of amenities close by.

# Neighborhood Snapshot

## NEIGHBORHOOD OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

### Opportunities

- Redevelopment of institutional properties, such as the Burnet Learning Center and the federal parking lots on Cesar Chavez, can create opportunities for new mixed-income housing.
- Potential transit investments can expand mobility options and improve safety for all users along South St. Mary's Street.
- Opportunities for compatible redevelopment along mixed-use corridors such as S. St. Mary's, S. Presa, and Labor Street to add main-street business and housing opportunities.
- Rehabilitation of historic commercial and residential buildings can maintain the traditional character of the neighborhood.

### Challenges

- Housing has become less affordable as more people want to live near downtown and new development has sometimes been out of character with traditional development patterns.
- Patrons of area businesses, arts venues, and restaurants use street parking in residential areas that local residents would like to have available for themselves.
- There is too much fast moving traffic along Labor Street, Devine Street, and others as people driving cars cut through the neighborhood to get into and out of downtown.
- Sidewalks throughout the neighborhood are in poor condition creating unsafe and uncomfortable walking conditions.

## Previous Neighborhood Plans

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS



The 2001 Lavaca Neighborhood Plan emphasized upkeep, rehabilitation, and preservation of the existing housing stock and maintaining the historic character of Lavaca. Adaptive re-use and compatible infill housing development were also emphasized.

The neighborhood plan called for neighborhood service business retention and reinvestment on South Presa



Street and South St. Mary's Street. A Neighborhood Conservation District, improved off-street parking management, and streetscaping improvements were some of the recommendations to improve the pedestrian environment and support neighborhood businesses. Likewise, improved lighting, a complete network of safe sidewalks, and safe crossings were also called for. However, the plan's goal to maintain a neighborhood grocery store

is unfulfilled following the closure of the neighborhood grocery store in the mid-2000's.




Increasing the amount of parks and open space within Lavaca was also a goal of the Lavaca Neighborhood Plan, along with parks programming. The creation of three new pocket parks including public art is an important accomplishment of the neighborhood.

### MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

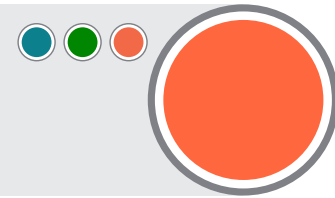
- The redevelopment of Victoria Courts with input from the Lavaca Neighborhood.
- Reduction in commercial vacancy and an increase in small business development.
- Increase in park space including three pocket parks and public art.
- National and Local Historic Districts and the South Presa/South St. Mary's Neighborhood Conservation District.
- Overall improvement of neighborhood appearance.
- Establishment of a neighborhood parking program to manage on-street parking.

## Neighborhood Priorities

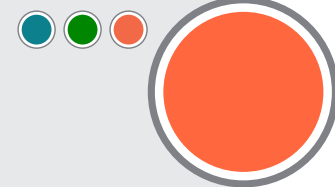


-  Priority from Previous Neighborhood Plan
-  Aligns with Sub-Area Plan Recommendation
-  Aligns with other Neighborhood Action Plan Recommendation

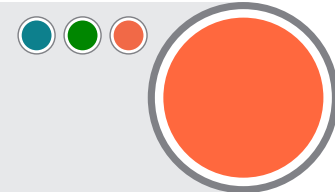
- Conserve buildings that contribute to the essential neighborhood character. Rehabilitate deteriorated homes and apartments.



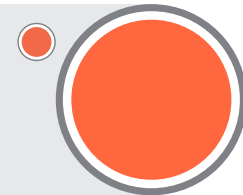
- Support business growth on South Presa and South St. Mary's Streets. A mix of uses is desired on both; however South Presa should be primarily residential in character and South St. Mary's primarily commercial.



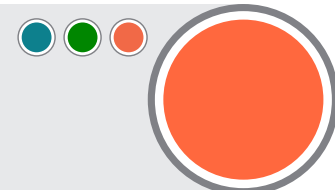
- Manage parking demand. Innovative transportation and parking solutions should be used to mitigate traffic and parking congestion instead of simply creating or requiring parking areas.



- Improve Labor Street Park with amenities such as a dog park, walking paths, and picnic areas.



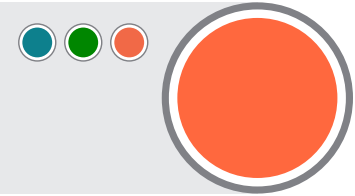
- Implement context sensitive lighting improvements and other walkability improvements throughout the neighborhood to create a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians as well as motorists. Improve the pedestrian environment by creating safe, attractive, and functional streetscapes.



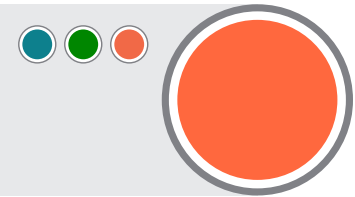


## Neighborhood Priorities

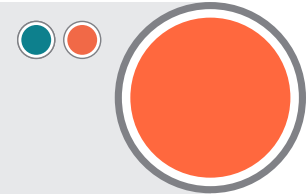
- Encourage new dwellings on empty land in the neighborhood, if the development follows traditional patterns of scale and building configuration. Support diverse housing types and housing affordability, including housing for families.



- Support pedestrian and transit service improvements on South Saint Mary's Street. Consider reconfiguring lanes, street trees and wider sidewalks to make walking and using transit safer, more convenient, and more comfortable.



- Artistically illuminate and decorate the Carolina Street and Florida Street underpasses under IH-37.



- Monitor and enforce music and noise levels of neighborhood bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues. See the Lavaca Neighborhood Plan, and multiple sections of the Downtown Area Regional Center Plan for additional information and policy recommendations related to the Lavaca Neighborhood.

