

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs

1 NO POVERTY 	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	13 CLIMATE ACTION 

CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
3. CULTURE AND EDUCATION
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
7. CULTURE, URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACE

RESILIENCE, SKILL, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, CONSERVATION, HERITAGE, ACCESS, MINORITIES, JOBS, DIGITAL, URBANISM, COVID, CULTURAL RIGHTS, CLIMATE CHANGE

1. San Antonio and culture

San Antonio is a city of Texas (United States of America) with a population of 1,4 million inhabitants. San Antonio has the 7th largest population in the United States, the 2nd largest in Texas, and is one of the nation's fastest growing cities. Under the leadership of Mayor Nirenberg, the City has adopted an equity framework in budgeting to reduce poverty, improve public health, and overcome historical socioeconomic inequality. The City is focused on making key investments necessary to accommodate San Antonio's growth, which is expected to nearly double the city's population by 2040.

Approximately 3% of the city (roughly 13,000 parcels) are designated as historic. The city's 34 local historic districts roughly mirror the demographics of the city as a whole in terms of race, income level, education level, etc. This means that many are in need of assistance with the skills and resources needed to maintain their homes. The Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) programming outlined in this community initiative serves to advance goals of job creation, workforce development, affordable housing, and community resilience tied to cultural identity. Culture plays a vital role in the economic and social well-being of San Antonio.

COVID-19 forced the cancellation of culturally relevant events including planned community engagement, heritage celebrations, and public meetings, leading the City of San Antonio's Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) to design an innovative, and proactive response to maintain contact with, and participation from, San Antonio's residents.



**THE CITY OF SAN ANTONIO'S OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION (OHP)
DESIGNED AN INNOVATIVE, AND PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO MAINTAIN CONTACT
WITH, AND PARTICIPATION FROM, SAN ANTONIO'S RESIDENTS.**

2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The aim of the OHP COVID-19 response policy is to advance and leverage cultural heritage to ensure the resiliency of San Antonio's social fabric and economic viability of the heritage sector, including organizational, community, and individual levels. The policy and its related programming use cultural heritage to advance goals of job creation, workforce development, affordable housing, and community resilience to cultural identity. The objectives of the response were to create new avenues to build awareness of cultural heritage, to "build back better" in a post disaster recovery, and to augment connections with local youth and educational institutions to fortify a new generation of heritage stewards.

2.2. Project development

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted our city's reliance on San Antonio's cultural heritage, but also highlighted its vulnerabilities. It also amplified how the living heritage is intertwined with housing affordability, workforce training and education, environmental sustainability, and equitable development policies.

The OHP COVID-19 response policy concerned few avenues:

- OHP employed digital technologies to promote and celebrate living heritage through virtual storytelling, webinars, events, and symposia, which widely expanded reach and audiences.

LEVERAGING LIVING HERITAGE FOR PROSPERITY

at the
LIVING HERITAGE SYMPOSIUM

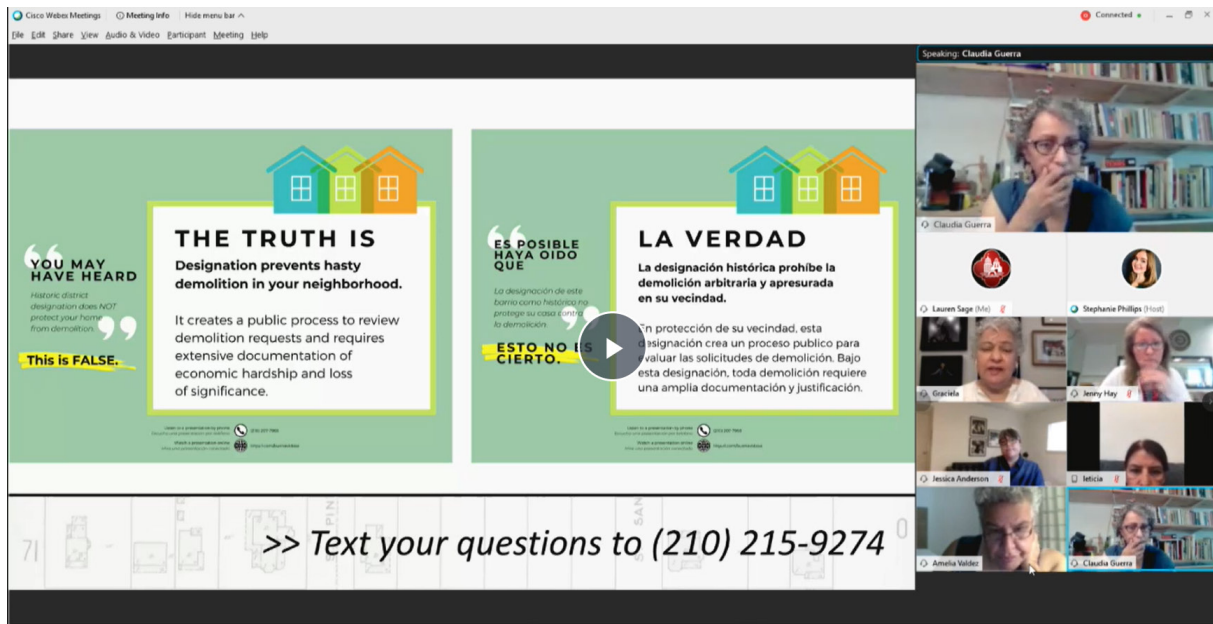
FEBRUARY 11, 2022



NEFERTITTI JACKMON, City of Austin, TX
FELIX HEISEL, Circular Construction Lab, Cornell Univ.
EVE PICKER, Small Change
DUFFIE WESTHEIMER, Townsite Community Land Trust

livingheritage.sanantonio.gov

- The policy includes reaching and engaging diverse and historically underserved communities in San Antonio. OHP incorporates several strategies to ensure access and participation from low-income communities, women, and communities of color, for example to Spanish speaking and working-class communities by providing Spanish translation, holding meetings when and where most appropriate for communities, and working with community organizations to plan engagement and outreach.
- The City is also developing a strategic plan for cultural context statements. Beginning with an African American Cultural Context statement followed by others as identified by citizens will assist the program in articulating the histories of underrepresented ethnicities and cultures. This effort will be accompanied by a survey of known historically African American settlements and neighborhoods which is anticipated to result in enhanced interpretation, recognition, and possible designation. Archaeological work in one of these neighborhoods recently uncovered the foundation walls of a 19th-Century African American Church in Downtown San Antonio. Through community input, the site will be interpreted and incorporated into the design of the San Pedro Creek Cultural Park, a major public project that enhances and provides pedestrian connectivity to one of San Antonio's culturally significant waterways. The department has also launched a local markers program which aims to commemorate untold, undertold, and geographically diverse stories in a way that is accessible, affordable, and inclusive by removing cost barriers to officially recognizing important San Antonio stories.
- The program views the continuous reuse of buildings and their materials as a basis for local economic prosperity, social equity, and urban and natural stewardship in the face of climate change. Climate change will disproportionately affect working-class communities and people of color and will contribute to the loss of heritage for these communities, eroding a critical method for sustaining inherent resilience. The City of San Antonio adopted a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, and other recent policy efforts include a Deconstruction Ordinance which is aimed to mitigate the negative impacts of demolition which include landfill waste, air pollution, and increased reliance on virgin materials. Broadly, this program is developing a localized, inclusive, and culturally-rooted building reuse ecosystem. The City also has designed hands-on and heritage-centered programs that are aimed at reducing inequities that affect long neglected communities of color, resulting in their lack of access to financial benefits from preservation, including housing security and affordable housing.
- Focused on building back better, the Living Heritage Trades Academy launched increasing training of preservation crafts and skills through apprenticeships, hands-on training, and class instruction on traditional building methods and materials.



THE POLICY AND ITS RELATED PROGRAMMING USE CULTURAL HERITAGE TO ADVANCE GOALS OF JOB CREATION, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO CULTURAL IDENTITY.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

The COVID-19 crisis revealed the necessity for cultural heritage to be integrated with other broad initiatives. The impact of cultural heritage and preservation in economic, health, sustainability, and other social issues became evident, allowing new collaborations between city departments, new partnerships, and strengthening relationships with external groups. The result is that the OHP audience reach grew, in size and geographic areas, while expanding methods of outreach and delivery systems.

3.2. Assessment

OHP measures success by the number of participants in the public outreach campaigns as well as the feedback and input community provide. OHP uses data from case histories and annual customer service surveys. Using data from a local Equity Atlas, programs are evaluated based on representation in areas home to communities of color and low-income communities. The Equity Atlas data also informs on needed policy changes or recommendations to further promote equity in the administration of programming and initiatives.

3.3. Continuity

The City of San Antonio has strong backing from elected official for cultural initiatives, but special attention has been provided to the Living Heritage Trades Academy and the Deconstruction and Circular Economy transformational project. Both have received the political will to develop policies and to provide funding for implementation.



4. Further information

San Antonio was a candidate for the fifth “UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21” International Award (February – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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