Housing Strategy Profile: San Antonio

**Locality:** San Antonio, Texas (USA)
**City Population:** 1.5 million (2018)
**Metro Population:** 2.5 million (2018)
**Plan Title:** Housing Policy Framework
**Date of Plan:** August 2018
**Date of Case Study:** January 2020

**Substantive Highlights**

The Housing Policy Framework was prepared by the Mayor’s Housing Policy Task Force and the consulting firm Economic & Planning Systems. As the City experiences substantial population growth, the plan’s primary goal is to ensure quality, affordable housing for all income levels in San Antonio.

Leveraging up to $4 billion in additional private investment, the City expects to produce nearly 18,700 units of rental and ownership housing at targeted income levels.

The Task Force focuses on five key actions to guide its plan: 1) Develop a Coordinated Housing System, 2) Increase City Investment in Housing with a 10-Year Funding Plan, 3) Increase Affordable Housing Production, Rehabilitation, and Preservation, 4) Protect and Promote Neighborhoods, and 5) Ensure Accountability to the Public.

Rising taxes, barriers to supply, discrimination, and displacement were some of the factors identified as contributing to an increasing gap in the supply of quality, affordable housing available to those making under 80% AMI. Consequently, the framework prioritizes funding for households up to 60% AMI and provides graduated funding for households from 60-80% AMI. The rental housing part of the framework primarily focuses on low-income earners and vulnerable populations (including, but not limited to, seniors and people with disabilities), who are most likely to be affected by these issues. The framework proposes a variety of policy tools to implement its action items such as tax measures (tax-increment financing, tax exemptions, preservation districts), affordable housing subsidies and incentives (by-right zoning), sale of city land, and a single-family rehab pilot program in cooperation with Habitat...
for Humanity and the San Antonio Housing Authority.

The framework also recommends creating a new, coordinated housing system within the City’s organizational structure that will fully resource the City’s existing Neighborhood and Housing Services Department and align the capacity of public and private sectors in housing. Furthermore, the framework calls for the creation of additional government oversight to make housing a transparent structural and organizational priority. Additionally, the framework calls for an executive-level housing leader to be hired to oversee the new coordinated housing system.

**Process**

San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg created the Mayor’s Housing Policy Task Force (MHPTF) in August 2017 to develop a comprehensive housing plan for the growing San Antonio, in cooperation with the consulting firm Economic & Planning Systems. The task force also received national and local technical support from the National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders and the Low-Income Support Coalition of San Antonio. The Task Force comprised five members from a variety of public and private backgrounds, including the President of the University Health System Foundation and a former City Councilwoman. The planning process also included the San Antonio Housing Authority, the Department of Planning & Community Development, Neighborhood Housing & Services Department, the Department of Human Services, the Office of Management & Budget, and others.

The planning approach consisted of three community meetings, eight public meetings, and the creation of five technical working groups made up of over 100 residents of San Antonio who had experience in planning, finance, special populations, and systems creation. The Task Force explicitly adopted and embraced a bottom-up, data-driven approach informed by the community members through the public meetings and input sessions, along with national best practices. The Task Force employed Mayor & City Staff resources to conduct city housing market, demographic, and economic research to inform the Task Force’s recommendations, in addition to meetings with City Councilmembers.

To engage with the community, MHPTF utilized its website and social media, placed flyers at public events and local community spaces, attended Chamber of Commerce meetings, met with more than 50 community groups and the neighborhood associations, and prioritized communications in both English and Spanish. MHPTF’s efforts to engage stakeholders and the community and collaborate with experts in housing and economic development strategy helped generate buy-in from the community. Background research and technical knowledge were the backbones to
creating a sense of urgency to the public and the City Council about San Antonio’s affordability problem. The Task Force’s working groups’ recommendations also unified around a central theme, “everyone should have a place to call home and housing must be decent, safe, affordable, stable, and delivered through a coordinated system.”

**Metrics, Targets, and Implementation**

The framework laid out a timeline for implementing the plan. To begin the implementation in September 2018, the Mayor and the City Council passed an ordinance to 1) adopt the MHPTF report, 2) reconstitute the City’s Housing Commission to oversee its implementation, and 3) direct the City staff to implement the recommendations with guidance from the Housing Commission.

Concurrently, the Mayor and the City Council passed a budget that prioritizes funding for the MHPTF plan’s recommendations. In July 2019, the Housing Commission issued its first annual report on policy recommendations and budget requests for FY2019/FY2020, and in September 2019, the FY2019/2020 Housing Budget was adopted and aligned with the 10-Year Funding Plan.

The plan also includes a number of specific housing production targets:

**Total: Produce 18,681 units over 10 years**

- 6,299 in ownership housing
- 12,382 in rental housing

**Ownership housing:**

- 2,342 units produced
- 2,314 units rehabbed
- 1,643 downpayment assistance

**Rental housing:**

- 8,498 units produced
- 3,884 units rehabbed/preserved

**Implementation Status**

The plan was approved in September 2018 and began implementation. The City estimates that 4,460 affordable units were financed in fiscal year 2019 as a direct result of the housing plan, a majority of which were funded through the housing tax credit program and the San Antonio Housing Trust, which offers property tax exemptions.
and bond financing. Additionally, the FY2020 City of San Antonio budget has earmarked more than $30 million towards affordable housing as part of the 10-Year Funding Plan.

### Coverage of Four Policy Pillars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coverage Items</th>
<th>Not Covered</th>
<th>Moderate Focus</th>
<th>Substantial Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create and preserve dedicated affordable housing units</td>
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<td>Promote affordability by reducing barriers to new supply</td>
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<td>Help households access private-market homes</td>
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<td>Protect against displacement and poor housing conditions</td>
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### Participating Agencies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agencies</th>
<th>No Role</th>
<th>Supporting Role</th>
<th>Leading Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office of the Mayor</td>
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<td>Office of the City/County Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Department</td>
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<td>Planning Department</td>
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<td>Development Agency</td>
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<td>Permitting/Inspections Department</td>
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<td>Finance/Tax Department</td>
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<td>Public Housing Authority</td>
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<td>City/County Council</td>
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### Policy Tools

The Plan identifies the following policy tools/proposals, organized according to the categories listed below:

**The City of San Antonio should take a leadership role in coordinating a community-wide housing system with housing and service providers**

- Fund a One-Stop Housing Center, including an online portal
Prioritize housing and neighborhoods in the City of San Antonio organizational structure
- Fully resource and staff the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department
- Create an executive position in the City Manager’s Office to lead housing and neighborhood-related activities

Develop a 10-year funding plan for affordable housing production and preservation
- Increase general fund revenue for affordable housing
- Create dedicated revenue source(s) for affordable housing
- Revise the City Charter to allow bond revenue to be used for affordable housing
- Establish financial leverage as a top priority in the utilization of public funds
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Housing Trust and provide a dedicated revenue source

Stabilize the homeownership rate in San Antonio by increasing the production, preservation, and rehabilitation of affordable homes
- Increase funding for down payment assistance and homebuyer counseling
- City funding/incentives for ownership housing
- Increase funding for housing rehab programs

Increase rehabilitation, production and preservation of affordable rental units
- City funding and incentives on rent-restricted units
- Funding for new rental units in communities that are linked with transportation, jobs and cultural assets

Create housing opportunities for the most vulnerable residents
- Increase funding for service-enriched housing

Remove barriers to housing production
- Revise the Unified Development Code to remove regulatory barriers to affordable housing
- Exempt affordable housing from San Antonio Water System fees
- Undertake a public process to determine standards to allow by-right zoning for affordable housing

Address the impact of rising taxes on housing affordability
- Tax exemptions, preservation districts, and TIFs.
Prevent and mitigate displacement
- Proactive outreach and counseling to low- and moderate-income households
- Relocation assistance for households up to 80 percent AMI, rapid re-housing, and housing navigators

Reduce housing discrimination and expand opportunity
- Citywide public education and outreach campaign about the importance of housing

Create a governance structure for oversight and public engagement
- Annual report to track and publicly report results of the full housing system
- Redefine the Housing Commission as a public oversight board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Groups Targeted</th>
<th>Little/No Focus</th>
<th>Moderate Focus</th>
<th>Substantial Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-30% AMI</td>
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<td>30-60% AMI</td>
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<td>60-80% AMI</td>
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<td>80-120% AMI</td>
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<td>Market Rate</td>
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Principal Housing Policy Objectives

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increasing rental affordability</th>
<th>Expanding affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preserving the affordability of subsidized rental housing</td>
<td>Reducing housing discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing homeownership</td>
<td>Reducing homelessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing housing supply</td>
<td>Preventing displacement</td>
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</table>
### Which Linkages with Housing Are Addressed?

- Health
- Transportation

### Which Local Funding Sources Are Proposed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Abatement</th>
<th>General Obligation Bonds</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tax Increment Financing</td>
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