

# San Antonio Promise Plan

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## Creating Opportunity in San Antonio

April 28, 2015 - The Eastside of San Antonio is a diverse, bilingual community with some of the city's oldest neighborhoods. The area was once a thriving community and the heart of the city's African-American Community. However, for years, citizens have voiced concerns about a lack of investment in the Eastside, resulting in high levels of poverty, unemployment, underperforming schools, and crime. The zone consists of nineteen contiguous census tracts, 22 square miles, encompassing 18,864 families. The area has a 35.2% poverty rate and an unemployment rate of over 11%.

San Antonio is the only city in the nation to receive the signature Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative grants which include: Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Grant, The Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant, the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant, and Promise Neighborhoods Implementation Grant.

Over the past 15 months, the City of San Antonio has established an office to assist with overall coordination and implementation of initiatives within the Promise Zone. In addition, a three-tier governance structure, which includes a coordinating council, 17 implementation partners, and multiple task forces, has been established to formulate revitalization strategies and policy.

Since the designation, the San Antonio Promise Zone has received \$32 million in federal investments to focus on education, economic development, health and wellness, housing, and neighborhood safety.

# Highlights

## Promoting Economic Development

The U.S. Economic Development Administration invested \$500,000 for economic growth in the San Antonio Promise Zone to support their work to develop and implement an economic development program that puts in place systematic efforts to reduce unemployment and increase incomes. San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside (SAGE) is using the funding to identify opportunities, for developing mixed-use, transit-oriented development projects to revitalize key commercial corridors in the Promise Zone.

In addition, SAGE launched a new equity investment fund designed to grow small businesses within the Eastside Promise Zone. The \$2 million loan program was developed in partnership with the National Development Council's Grow America Fund, with additional funding from area banks.

SAGE was also awarded a \$740,998 Community Economic Development (CED) grant from the Department of Health and Human Services to create an equity investment fund that is investing in three small businesses in San Antonio. These businesses represent a variety of industries including: data management/logistics, lodging and home health care. SAGE is also providing capacity building and technical assistance along with access to other financing to help these businesses create sustainable employment. This project will generate and sustain 47 jobs in the above three industries. CED requires that 75% of jobs created be filled by low-income individuals.

## Improving Business Access to Information Technology

The National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders (NALCAB) received a PRIME grant to provide capacity building services to microenterprise development organizations (MDOs) for the benefit of low-income Latino entrepreneurs, including clients located within the Promise Zone. NALCAB is using the grant funds to assist SAGE by assessing, refining, and aligning performance of those organizations with industry standards and community needs through the use of enhanced management information systems.

## Expanding Opportunity for Youth

The George Gervin Youth Center was awarded a \$1.1 million YouthBuild grant from the Department of Labor to build alternative education and training pathways for at-risk youth between the ages of 16 and 24 residing in the Eastside Promise Zone. The program is enrolling 64 young people and preparing them for jobs in good, middle-class careers including nursing and construction. The Center also received a \$2 million Training to Work grant from the Department of Labor to help young men and women from the Eastside Promise Zone who are participating in state or local work-release programs gain the job skills and supports necessary to advance along career pathways in high-demand occupations.

## Increasing Access to Healthy Foods

Two farmers markets were opened to give residents access to local fresh fruits and vegetables providing residents with nutritious foods. A farmers market opened on the city's Eastside at the Ella

Austin Community Center. The second market opened at the Sam Houston High School as a result of students researching farmers market locations in the city as part of a class project and found that Eastside was lacking.

## Work with AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA members are serving with the City of San Antonio's EastPoint & Promise Zone Office and key partners. Together, they drive the implementation of key strategies, facilitating communication and evaluating impact. The AmeriCorps VISTAs are working with the partners, faith-based community and neighborhood leaders to develop a grassroots community outreach plan to ensure that Promise Zone residents are aware of available programs. The VISTAs also attend all neighborhood association meetings and are developing a Neighborhood Association Leadership Academy to strengthen neighborhood capacity and sustainability.

## Increasing Community Engagement

The San Antonio Promise Zone hosted a number of events in the community to increase resident engagement and expand the coalition of partners. These include:

- Promise Zone 101 Conference for businesses, non-profits and community members. Over 200 people were in attendance.
- The City of San Antonio's Economic Development Department and the Office of EastPoint and Real Estate Services hosted the *Ready, Set, Work!* Eastside job fair at the Second Street Baptist Church Community Center. More than 1000 job-seekers attended and over 60 companies were represented. Twenty participants were hired onsite.
- Over 200 volunteers participated in the community driven Paint-A-Thon held this past March. The event's mission was to paint 15 homes of elderly, disabled, and military veteran residents in the Promise Zone.

## Looking Forward

In the upcoming year, the San Antonio Promise Zone will focus on expanding educational opportunities through the development of a charter school, developing a new Head Start program, and providing low income children with pathways to education, jobs, entrepreneurship, and other opportunities.

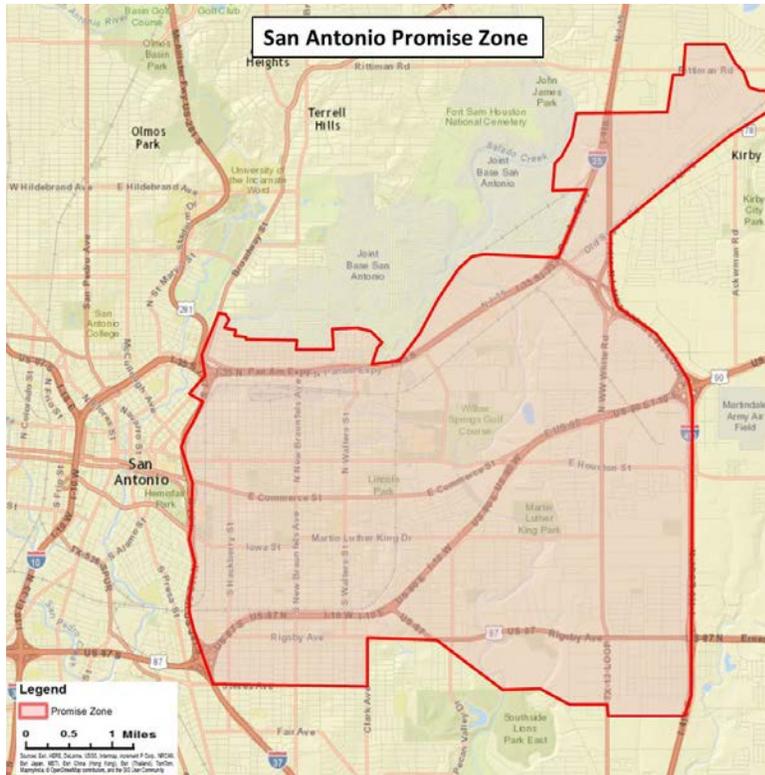
In addition, the San Antonio Promise Zone will be partnering with the Alamo Community Colleges to lead workforce development and training to connect residents to jobs in key growth areas.

The Promise Zone designation has served as a catalyst providing the community resources and focus to implement the strategies outlined in the Promise Zone plan. By 2025, the San Antonio Promise Zone will be a vibrant community in demand, rich in diversity and opportunity.

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