

Search...

GOV & POLITICS

City Planning & Dev

Society

Transportation

Housing

Military

Water & Energy

See All From Category

EDUCATION

Pre-K

K-12

Higher Education

Charter Schools

Public Schools

Workforce Dev

Policy & Programs

See All From Category

ARTS & CULTURE

Museums & Galleries

Photos & Film

Entertainment & Nightlife

Eats

Music

History

Fiesta

The Missions

See All From Category

ECO

San Antonio River

Parks

Sustainability

Nature

Wildlife

See All From Category

BUSINESS & TECH

Startups

Small Business

Major Employers

Base Redevelopment

Science

Oil & Gas

See All From Category

URBAN LIFE

Where I Live

SA Voices

Profiles

RR Conversations

See All From Category

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Food

Outdoor Activities

Health Care

Fitness

Sports

Public Safety

See All From Category



EVENTS

Submit An Event

Event Calendar

[Home](#)

[About](#)

[About Us](#)

[Terms of Service](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Permissions & Copyright](#)









[Submit Content](#)

[Advertise – Sponsor.](#)

ABOUT

- About Us
- Terms of Service
- Privacy Policy
- Permissions & Copyright

HOME SUBMIT CONTENT ADVERTISE – SPONSOR.








 SEARCH... 

# RIVARD REPORT

Urban. Independent. All About San Antonio.

GOV & POLITICS	EDUCATION	ARTS & CULTURE	ECO	BUSINESS & TECH
City Planning & Dev	Pre-K	Museums & Galleries	San Antonio River	Startups
Society	K-12	Photos & Film	Parks	Small Business
Transportation	Higher Education	Entertainment & Nightlife	Sustainability	Major Employers
Housing	Charter Schools	Eats	Nature	Base Redevelopment
Military	Public Schools	Music	Wildlife	Science
Water & Energy	Workforce Dev	History	See All From Category	Oil & Gas

See All From Category    Policy & Programs    Fiesta    See All From Category

See All From Category    The Missions    URBAN LIFE    HEALTH & WELLNESS

See All From Category    Where I Live    Food

SA Voices    Outdoor Activities

Profiles    Health Care

RR Conversations    Fitness

See All From Category    Sports

Public Safety


See All From Category

EVENTS

Submit An Event

Event Calendar

**Tuesday Nights at the Briscoe**  
**FREE Admission 4-9pm**

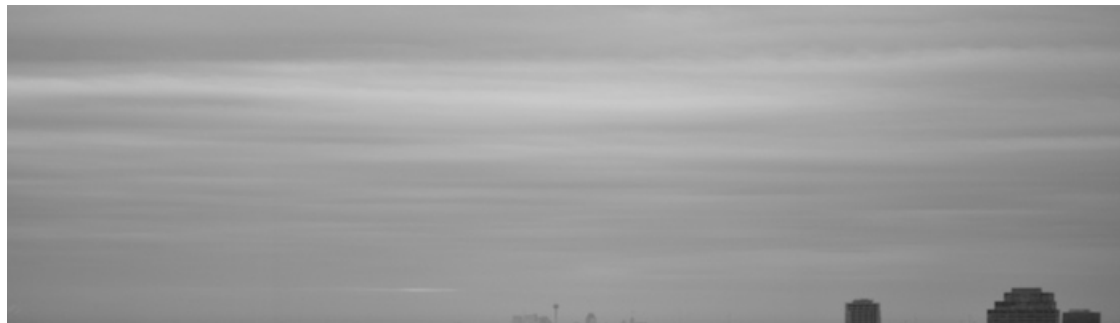


**THE BRISCOE**  
 Western Art Museum

- CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS -

# City Planning for San Antonio Growth Bomb

ROBERT RIVARD on 29 August, 2014 at 03:15



SIGN I





Comprehensive long-term planning is emerging as the hallmark of Mayor Ivy Taylor's 300 days in office, a good thing given the looming challenges facing San Antonio, one of the nation's fastest growing cities and one of the most geographically dispersed.

Inside a crowded conference room at City Hall on Thursday, Mayor Taylor sat in on the first meeting of her newly formed **City Council Comprehensive Planning Committee**, chaired by District 8 Councilmember Ron Nirenberg. Also attending were District 1 Councilmember Diego Bernal, District 4 Councilmember Rey Saldaña, and District 9 Councilmember Joe Krier.

The group listened as two of the City's top planning experts, John Dugan, director of the City's **Planning and Community Development Department**, and Mike Frisbie, director of the City's **Transportation and Capital Improvements Department**, offered a fascinating and sobering look into the future and the kind of city, for better or worse, San Antonio will be in the year 2040.

One million people who are not here today are on their way to San Antonio, set to arrive in a steady, unbroken stream of newcomers over the next two and half decades. A city of 1.4 million today will be 2.4 million by 2040 – more if the City annexes outlying areas of Bexar County that are populating at an even faster pace than the outer reaches of the city. The county population, which now stands at 1.8 million, likely will reach 3 million.

Dugan said San Antonio added 430,000 people in the last decade.

"The metro areas in Texas are all going to boom, we don't need to compete for growth, it's going to happen," Frisbie said.

Frisbie's presentation predicted 500,000 new jobs in the metro area created over that arc of time, with 500,000 new housing units needed to meet the growing population. The Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) predicts the creation of 675,000 jobs countywide in the same time frame.

Frisbie will be the key city director guiding officeholders as they work on a Strategic Multi-Modal Transportation Plan that Taylor has



promised to bring before voters for their approval, a response to the suburban-driven opposition to the City's financial participation in VIA Metropolitan Transit's streetcar project.

Click [here](#) for Frisbie's presentation.

Where will all these new San Antonians live and work? It depends.

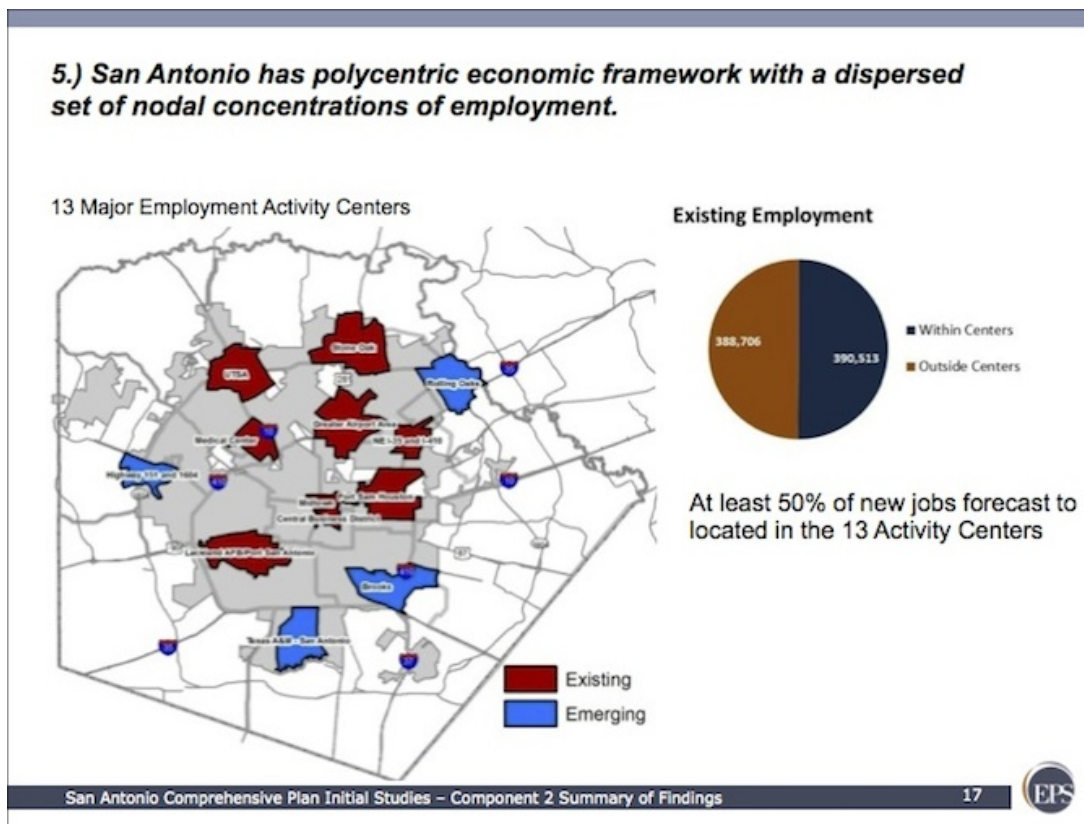
Dugan said San Antonio is unlike many major metropolitan areas that have a concentrated economic center.

"San Antonio is polycentric," Dugan said, catching everyone's attention with an unfamiliar word. "That means we have multiple economic centers."

Thirteen distinct established and emerging economic centers, to be exact, a subject that will be explored in a future article on the Rivard Report. The USAA-Medical Center-Valero-UTSA corridor is one such established economic center, while Brooks City-Base and Port San Antonio is an emerging center.



Transportation and Capital Improvements Department Director Mike Frisbie



Logic suggests people will want to live near the economic center where they work. Dugan, however, cited the [2013 National Community Preference Survey](#) conducted by the National Association of Realtors that reported that six out of 10 Americans say they want to live in a walkable, mixed-use community.

“Sixty percent of respondents favor a neighborhood with a mix of houses, stores, and other businesses that are within walking distance, rather than neighborhoods requiring driving between home, work, and recreation,” the NAR Survey overview states. “Respondents indicated that while the size of a home or yard does matter, most are willing to compromise size for a preferred neighborhood and less commuting.”

Dugan said San Antonio was building exactly the opposite kind of city, despite all the attention and effort to revitalize the city’s urban core with new residential developments, a better job base and public amenities such as the San Antonio River Improvements and the redevelopment of Hemisfair Park.

“That’s huge,” Dugan said of the survey results. “Very, very few of our neighborhoods are walkable. Fourteen percent to be exact.”

Dugan said comprehensive planning and smart city policies could guide the city’s coming growth bomb and distribute the new arrivals to benefit the entire city. Land studies, he said, show that more than 100,000 of the predicted 500,000 new housing units could be built inside Loop 410, thus infusing 22 percent of the population growth in the urban core. Another 20 percent could be accommodated on the city’s resurgent Southside.



*Big Tex in Southtown will capitalize on the recently completed San Antonio River ecosystem restoration project and populates almost half a mile of its west bank with apartments and restaurants. Words and rendering courtesy of Alamo Architects.*

Patches of the city outside Loop 410 and inside Loop 1604, the original suburbs developed in the '60s and '70s, are now in decline and in need of redevelopment and new investment. Dugan said 23 percent of the population growth could fit there, leaving 35 percent to settle outside Loop 1604.

Bexar County Commissioners reviewing their own **2015 proposed budget**, were told by county planners on Tuesday that the biggest challenge they face now and in the coming years is the startling rate of population growth in the far reaches of the county, well beyond the reach of city services with expectations that county government will meet infrastructure, public safety and social needs.

Dugan said the city faces two paths forward. One is allowing unfettered suburban sprawl now underway, which will cause the city to double in geographic size from 500 to 1,000 square miles by 2040, or city leaders can seize the opportunity at hand through comprehensive planning and adopt “smart growth strategies” to contain the sprawl to 600 square miles.



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE  
& CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**  
La Villita Retail Shops, Galleries and Working Artist Studios  
*All proposals must be received no later than 11 a.m.,  
Central Time, on Friday, Aug. 7, 2015*

[Click Here  
for More  
Information](#)

What that comprehensive planning will entail was the subject of considerable discussion among the officeholders and senior staff.

"I am excited about the opportunity to develop a fabulous plan for this city," Mayor Taylor said at the outset of the meeting. "A few years ago we took the initiative to establish a vision, SA2020. By no means are we abandoning that."

Taylor added, "While we are excited by that growth ... we're not completely satisfied with the manner of growth."

Taylor has initiated an unprecedented effort to organize local government and engage citizens in a range of long-term planning efforts that will guide the city for years to come and build a new level of public confidence and support. It's an ambitious agenda for a short-term mayor, and success would be more certain if Taylor were going to pursue a longer term in office as mayor or if there were assurances that whoever follows her will embrace the work she is starting.



Mayor Ivy Taylor. Photo by Scott Ball.

For Nirenberg, chairman of the committee, and Bernal and Saldaña, two inner city council members with a deep commitment to transforming San Antonio's urban core, the immensity of the planning challenge will be both a test and opportunity.



Director of Planning  
and Community  
Development John

Dugan first led the Council team through a presentation of how Mayor Taylor was directing the Comprehensive Planning Committee to proceed. Click [here](#) to review. He later led the committee through his own presentation. Click [here](#) to view.


The committee will oversee the formation of a large Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board, which will include a network of other local government entities – the County, CPS Energy, SAWS, VIA, the San Antonio River Authority, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, universities and school districts.

Three members from the City Planning Commission and Nirenberg, as chairman of the Comprehensive Planning Committee, will serve as ex officio members. Each of the 10 City Council members will appoint a constituent to the advisory board.

A Citizens Planning Institute, designed to promote citizen engagement and public confidence that everyday citizens have a voice in the process, also will be formed. How citizens interested in serving can apply remains to be sorted out.



 Dugan

 The first task will be to galvanize leaders of all the diverse public organizations and amalgamate data from each one to accurately measure growth trends and patterns and smartly apply shared resources to best guide growth.

Achieving consensus and carrying out all that work in a coherent and transparent fashion that engages citizens all along the way is an equally important but very different kind of challenge. Planners said the effort will cost several million dollars drawn from city and federal funds, the hiring of consultants, and several months of preparatory groundwork.

One task will be to review the [1978 Major Thoroughfare Plan](#) and the [1997 Comprehensive Master Plan](#), which Dugan said contained more than 500 policy recommendations. Staff will have to determine how much those plans guided city leaders afterwards and how many recommendations never got off the shelf.

“A good comprehensive plan will be implemented, it won’t just sit on a shelf,” Nirenberg told his colleagues.

Only this time, a comprehensive plan likely will not be a document if city leaders expect to engage citizens. In 2014, it will have to be a user-friendly multimedia online portal that invites public engagement and allows citizens to observe and actively participate even if they never attend a single meeting.

## RELATED STORIES:

[San Antonio's Airport Adding Direct Flight to New Orleans. What City is Next?](#)

[Alamo Plaza Conversation Continues](#)

[County Cutting Tax Rate as Property Values Climb](#)

[City's Proposed Budget: No Tax Increase, No Frills](#)

[San Pedro Creek: San Antonio's Next Linear Park](#)

CATEGORIES	CITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT	GOV & POLITICS	HOUSING				
TAGGED	CITY COUNCIL	COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE	IVY TAYLOR	JOHN DUGAN	MIKE FRISBIE	ROBERT RIVARD	RON NIRENBERG



3



242



0



0

245

SHARES

**ROBERT RIVARD**

Robert Rivard is director of the Rivard Report.

[WEBSITE](#) [TWITTER](#) [FACEBOOK](#)

---

**PREVIOUS ARTICLE****AFTER THE SCHOOL FINANCE RULING: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR TEXAS?****NEXT ARTICLE****LABOR DAY RALLY TO HIGHLIGHT FAILING HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

---

THERE ARE **6** COMMENTS [ADD YOURS](#)



**THOMAS BECK VIA FACEBOOK** on 29 August, 2014 at 06:59

[Reply](#)

I am very impressed with our new Mayor. A breath of fresh air.



**KILO** on 29 August, 2014 at 08:19

[Reply](#)

Detroit is perceived as an abandoned city, with a population that has hemorrhaged by 60% in the last 70 years. While the population decline is indisputable, the fact remains Detroit's population density is 5,142/sq mi. Contrast that with San Antonio's density, just 2,800/sq mi. Without disputing any of the legitimate problems Detroit faces, the American city that is perceived as vacant and abandoned is almost twice as dense as San Antonio. If the entire 1.1 million newcomers expected to arrive in San Antonio settled in our existing 500 sq mi city limits, our density would rise to just 5,000/sq mi. That almost reaches the density of abandoned Detroit, but remains less than half of Chicago (11,800/sq mi), Philadelphia (11,400/sq mi), Boston (13,300 sq/mi), Miami (12,100 sq mi) and San Francisco (17,900 sq mi).

Although not necessarily accurate, if we consider goal of accommodating just 65% of the 1.1 million newcomers within Loop 1604 to be roughly equivalent to accommodating those newcomers in the existing city limits would raise San Antonio's density to a modest 4,230/sq mi. That's a significant improvement over today's sprawled city, but only slightly better than Houston, Dallas, Denver and Las Vegas, none of which are exactly known for their walkability. It would fall significantly short of the sprawl icon of Los Angeles (8,200/sq mi).

The Comprehensive Master Plan framework already has a goal to accommodate those 1.1 million newcomers in the existing city

limits. That goal should be steadfastly held to, and the first step in doing so is to put a moratorium on infrastructure expansion. No roads and no utilities would avert new developments. I anticipate others will claim any attempt to block development is an infringement of property rights, but I contend taxpayers have no obligation to make public investment in roads and utilities just to enable sprawl.

Unfortunately, the majority of city council members on this Comprehensive Planning Committee are vested in sprawl (Nirenberg, Krier, and even Saldana). Nirenberg and Krier led the charge against the streetcar, and are leading the charge for charter amendments that are deliberately anti-rail. Nirenberg and Krier are also leading the charge in new road capacity, especially new road capacity development over the Edwards Aquifer. Neither have a record supporting urbanization. And as much as I like Mayor Taylor, her record also remains spotty. She has shown zero commitment to multi-modal transportation and complete streets. Recall, she supported removing bike lanes from S. Flores and expanding S. Flores to four lanes. She also blocked implementation of bike lanes in District 2 because of objection to those bike lanes. She withdrew the city's commitment to the streetcar. Although she states publicly she supports multi-modal transportation, her actions suggest she supports it only as long as it is universally popular, which it likely never will be.



**CAROLYN ELLIS VIA FACEBOOK** on 29 August, 2014 at 08:53

[Reply](#)

Yes, really like the direction she's taking!



**CAROLYN ELLIS VIA FACEBOOK** on 29 August, 2014 at 08:53

[Reply](#)

Yes, really like the direction she's taking!



**CLAYTON ELKINS VIA FACEBOOK** on 29 August, 2014 at 15:59

[Reply](#)

I didn't support Ivy's position on the non-discrimination act (opposed it), but I am very eager to see what she can do for bringing economic development back inside Loop 410. This region has done a piss poor job of managing the growth. SA leaders are always referencing Portland, Oregon as a model for success. Portland is arguably the most well-planned city in the country. You don't have issues of lack of transportation options, urban sprawl, and extreme cases of income separation like you do in SA, where car is just about the only feasible way to travel from outside loop 410 to the downtown area, sprawl continues, and where you have the north side and then everywhere else, which doesn't matter nearly as much.



**KARI CARROLL** on 1 September, 2014 at 09:20

[Reply](#)

I really, really like your sentiment, Kilo. When you view it with the perspective of other cities' population densities and how far

behind we are because of our massive suburban sprawl, it makes one question the direction city leaders want to take us and the changes they are committed to making. Mayor Castro called this the decade of downtown, but half the council doesn't seem to be interested in that investment as rigorously as is necessary. Thank you for pointing out some of their records.

### POST A NEW COMMENT

Message

SEND


Notify me of follow-up comments by email.

Notify me of new posts by email.

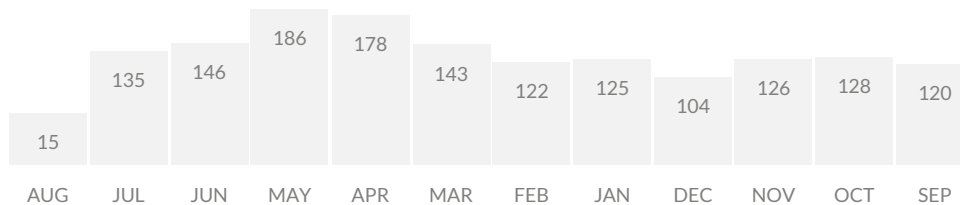
**YOSA + LOCAL ARTIST + OK COMPUTER**

---

**AUG 6 + BRICK at BLUE STAR + 6-9PM + \$12**



**RIVARD REPORT'S**  
**ESTÁTICA**  
MUSIC SERIES



[BACK TO TOP](#)

## SUBMISSIONS TO RR

We hope to make you part of the Rivard Report. Interested? Contact us via email [hello@rivardreport.com](mailto:hello@rivardreport.com) to submit an article or opinion piece, photographs or a video. We'll post the best submissions, whether you're 18 or 80. See our submission guidelines.

## LATEST TWEETS

Food Deserts and Food Swamps: how our food system is making us hungry @safoodbank @HousingSAT <http://t.co/bCZkPf4XYD> <http://t.co/NvejsKa2BA>  
@rivardreport - moments ago

Architect & CM @RTrevino\_D1's vision for what to do w/ confederate sculpture in @TravisParkSA <http://t.co/Grc2sHHfnm> <http://t.co/0zDucJsZpZ>  
@rivardreport - moments ago




## TOPICS

Gov & Politics	Education
Arts & Culture	Eco
Business & Tech	Urban Life
Health & Wellness	Events


## CONNECT WITH US



## SEARCH

## SIGN UP FOR WEEKLY REPORT:

Copyright © 2014 The Arsenal Group. All Rights Reserved. | Web Design By Firecat Studio.