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As Election Nears, City Launches SA Tomorrow Plan

JOAN VINSON on 12 April, 2015 at 07:05



Former SA2020 CEO Darryl Byrd and his son answer questions on a computer during the SA Tomorrow kickoff at the Alamo Convocation Center. Photo by Joan Vinson.

Mayor Ivy Taylor said San Antonio can't wait another day to start planning for tomorrow and for the next 25 years of tomorrows. With less than a month until city elections, which could extend or end her time as mayor, she launched her SA Tomorrow plan at the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) Alamo Convocation Center on Saturday.

Families perused the event's offerings, taking part in the interactive activities geared toward children. The perimeter of the Convocation Center was lined with booths where attendees could provide feedback and respond to surveys. Tables sat in the middle of the room, piled with markers and paper for community members to illustrate their ideas for the future of San Antonio.

"Family-friendly events are part of our outreach strategy because our children are what inspire and drive many of us to improve our city, to work for a better SA Tomorrow. When our children become adults, we want them to choose San Antonio, to stay here and to grow their families and their businesses here." Mayor Taylor said.

SA Tomorrow is a long-term comprehensive three-tiered plan that aims to guide the city toward sustainable growth as one million more people pile into the city from now until 2040. The plan addresses housing, transportation, jobs, and the overall vision of San Antonio's future.

Each tier of the plan was displayed on a wall at the convocation center, inviting citizen input. Attendees could illustrate what kind of transportation they would like to see in the future, or describe or sketch what they believed to be the most beautiful neighborhood imaginable.

Taylor's timing for the launch drew criticism from mayoral candidate Mike Villarreal who said the kickoff was a campaign event disguised as public policy, a charge Taylor dismissed. Although planning for SA Tomorrow began before Taylor decided to

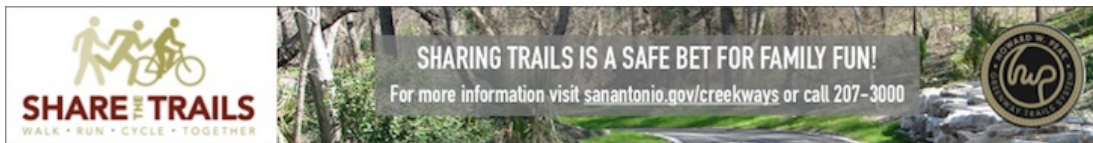
announced her candidacy for mayor, Villarreal said Taylor should have delayed the launch until after the May 9 vote.

Planning and Community Development Director John Dugan said the purpose of the SA Tomorrow plan is to manage the city in a way that does not diminish the current quality of life.

Mayor Taylor echoed his words, saying San Antonio has to plan for its growth now. She said she was pleased to see children roaming the event since “ultimately, at the end of the day, this is about them.

“This is not ending today, this is just the start,” she said.

Councilmember Ron Nirenberg (D8) asked the crowd to imagine San Antonio 25 years from now when one million more people will be living in the city, which will add an estimated 500,000 new jobs and as many housing units and vehicles. Given the city’s worsening sprawl over the last few decades, the predicted growth can be expected to continue those trends unless the city adopts new long-term growth management policies.



“What we’re trying to do today is figure out how we deal with all of that growth and make it beneficial for all of us,” he said.

Nirenberg said the initiative includes significant citizen engagement similar to the SA2020 initiative launched in 2009 by then-Mayor Julián Castro. How the SA Tomorrow plan will affect SA2020, if at all, remains to be seen post-election. The answer may have a lot to do with who is elected mayor and how she or he along with the new City Council feel about SA2020 and SA Tomorrow.

The event, which lasted five hours, attracted about 400 citizens, adults and children alike.

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JOAN VINSON

Rivard Report Assistant Editor Joan Vinson is a San Antonio native who graduated from The University of Texas with a bachelor in Journalism. She's a yoga fanatic and an adventurer at heart.

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JEFFRY VAN SLYCKE on 12 April, 2015 at 08:59

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SATomorrow has great potential, its purpose is on target, but I fear for its failure. SATomorrow is a concept that should be a staple of any community. Already, the creation has omitted the community, and was crafted in the hands of a few. Just as an organization's mission statement should be crafted with input from all stakeholders, so this program should have included the community.

So let's take what we have, give life to it, and allow it to be the vision all share. But to do so, the program must gain the active participation all pockets of our community. Apathy is a difficult obstacle to overcome, but we must not surrender.

Seeing the potential of SATomorrow invigorates me more to be elected to Council District 9 to ensure the programs success. As a school teacher, I never give up on a single student, and as A Councilman, I will never give up on our community.

My post is not to use this as a campaign outreach, rather to raise the red flag that this must be a community driven program to be successful. At this time, I see only the voices of the few, and no voices from among the community in its formulation.

All the best to SATomorrow—we need it's success, and more than ever, we need it now!



TODD MOREY on 12 April, 2015 at 11:06

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How does this compare and contrast to the SA2020 initiative?



JILLIAN HARRIS VIA FACEBOOK on 12 April, 2015 at 12:01

[Reply](#)

Thanks for a great write-up!

From the article:

“The purpose of the kickoff event was to educate and engage community members on the future of San Antonio... Dugan said the kickoff also was an opportunity to collect information about people's values.”

Sounds like community engagement and involvement to me. The kick-off was the starting point of the public engagement process, with workshops, community meetings, and technical groups meeting over the next several months to gather feedback and input regarding how San Antonians want their city to look with 1 million extra people.

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