



### Planning Advocate



#### ***Support of planning and planners***

**Illustrate how the nominee’s work has increased the understanding of the planning process. Indicate how the nominee has shown a clear understanding of, and support for, the role of planners in public life.**

Mayor Ron Nirenberg’s support and advocacy has been instrumental in planning for the San Antonio’s growth for the last decade. As the Mayor of one of the fastest growing regions in the country, he has dedicated his work to help plan for the challenges facing our city and has been a champion for comprehensive planning, inclusive economic development, and environmental stewardship since first elected as a councilmember in 2013.

In 2016, then Councilmember Nirenberg was a Tri-Chair for the SA Tomorrow initiative which included the Comprehensive Plan, Sustainability Plan, and Multimodal Transportation Plan for the City. Through the SA Tomorrow planning process, he was continuously present to engage with residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to promote planning for San Antonio. Additionally, he advocated for the initiative through thought pieces related to SA Tomorrow to garner support, understanding, and visibility.

Mayor Nirenberg continues to champion SA Tomorrow, beyond City Council adoption, by ensuring there was a process in place to implement the now adopted plans. Under his leadership the City of San Antonio has since adopted the city’s first *SA Climate Ready Action and Adaptation Plan*, a *Strategic Housing Implementation Plan* and has continued to advocate for the Comprehensive Plan being implemented by 30 *SA Tomorrow Sub-Area Plans*.

Mayor Nirenberg continues to encourage residents to be engaged in comprehensive planning though the sub-area planning process. He also supports education in planning through the Mayor’s K-12 Smart City Challenge inspired by the SA Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan. The initiative, now in its sixth year, receives support from the Mayor’s Office and is designed so that K-12 students can learn and innovate for a better city. The program introduces students to a different planning topic annually, which they must then develop and pitch a project in for an opportunity to win the Mayor’s Smart City Cup.

#### ***Effectiveness and results***

**Describe the extent that the nominee has been effective in formulating and implementing plans and ideas in support of good planning. Identify the level of influence**

**and effectiveness achieved by the nominee within different segments of the community.**

Under the leadership of Mayor Ron Nirenberg, the City of San Antonio has adopted the City's Comprehensive Plan in 2016, and nine SA Tomorrow Sub-Area plans, with nine more currently underway. The SA Tomorrow Sub-Area planning initiative, now in its third phase, has received continued support from the Mayor. He actively meets with the Planning Department and shares information with his constituents. The Mayor's support influences the visibility of the planning process and encourages residents and other external stakeholders to become involved.

Throughout his tenure as a Councilman and as Mayor, Mayor Nirenberg has continued to support SA Tomorrow initiatives extended from the Sustainability Plan, and Multimodal Transportation Plans, including the *SA Climate Ready Action and Adaptation* adopted in 2019, the *Mayor's Youth Engagement Council for Climate Initiatives*, and an update to the City's Bike Network Plan. Additionally, the Mayor and City Council adopted a Strategic Housing Implementation Plan (SHIP) in 2021, a 10-year, cross-organizational vision for affordable housing. This initiative aims to stabilize households by preserving and/or creating over 28,000 homes and raising household incomes over the next decade. The SHIP builds off the Housing Policy Framework which was accepted by the Mayor and Council in 2018, to prioritize affordable housing development and preservation in the community. This adoption led way to the creation of a City dashboard to track affordable housing initiatives, and the Housing Affordability in San Antonio event, which connects residents to key community partners and resources to assist with navigating the housing ecosystem.

As a sustainable and equitable planning champion, Mayor Nirenberg continues to encourage and support the Planning Department's mission to collaboratively guide growth and development to protect our city's history and resources and promote an equitable and sustainable city accessible to all San Antonians.

# Planning Advocate

## 2023 APATX Nomination

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**Mayor Ron Nirenberg**



Councilman Ron Nirenberg (D8) shows his son, Jonah, a map of San Antonio in City Hall. Photo by Jonathan Alonzo.





# The Mayor's K-12 Smart City Challenge

[Message from Mayor Nirenberg](#)[Competition](#)[Schedule](#)[Register](#)[Partners & Team](#)[Past Winners](#)[Contact](#)

Inspired by the SA Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan



## Message from Mayor Ron Nirenberg

Dear Neighbors,

Building the city we deserve requires that we dream big and face our challenges head on. With 1.1 million new residents expected to be living in our city by 2040, both the opportunities and challenges facing our city will grow. Thanks to the SA Tomorrow Plan, a blueprint for our city's future, city leaders are working to figure out how we can grow responsibly and sustainably. The plan also offers an opportunity for us to educate and engage our K-12 students. What ideas do they have to help us tackle our future challenges?



Working with local non-profits, educators, and community leaders, for the sixth year we will sponsor *SA Smart: The Mayor's K-12 Smart City Challenge*. In 2023, students will revisit our Year 1 challenge. They will propose ways to improve transportation in San Antonio with eye toward quality of life for all our residents. As students pursue the challenge, they will learn science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) content through STEM and STEAM (STEM+Arts) experiences. They'll learn how to critically analyze problems, work with mentors and peers, and communicate findings—all critical skills in the 21st century economy. It will be my privilege to award the winning student team the sixth *Mayor's Smart City Cup*.

The city we deserve is one that encourages our children to learn, work, play and live in San Antonio. This program is one more step toward building that city! I encourage you to join us.



BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS & TECH EDUCATION GOV & POLITICS

# Councilman Nirenberg: SA Tomorrow and the Road Ahead



by **Ron Nirenberg**

January 1, 2016



Councilman Ron Nirenberg (D8) shows his son, Jonah, a map of San Antonio in City Hall. Photo by Jonathan Alonzo.

In 2016, Erika and I will celebrate our 15th wedding anniversary. At 24, I found myself head-over-heels, married, and dreaming of the life we wanted to build together: a home in San Antonio, raising a family, and in careers we loved. It would have been nice to have a roadmap to that bright future, some guidance about career changes, parenting in the 21st century, or how to be the kind of husband that your wife falls in love with every year. But most of us tend to think about the big picture first, focusing on outcomes rather than planning for them. It's what gives us vision, inspiration, and what makes us optimistic about our futures. We work hard every day for those grand outcomes.

And so it is with San Antonio, our beloved city. We think of it as a celebration of diversity, and a city rich in history and world heritage on the verge of its 300th anniversary. We have a vision – one shaped by our entire community, SA2020 – with one glorious outcome: to be the safest big city in America, growing sustainably and equitably, and investing in its human capital.

But much like it takes planning, deliberate action and, sometimes, painstaking attention to details to build a life together, so will it take to make our city's vision a reality. In 2016, we will deliver a roadmap – SA Tomorrow – for our collective outcome, and my hope for San Antonio is that, together, we follow it.

## What We Need to Plan For

The challenges facing our city are real, and they are here. The Austin-San Antonio corridor is among the fastest growing regions in the country, and conservative projections show the Bexar County population doubling over the next 35 years. By 2040, we expect over one million new San Antonio residents who will demand 500,000 new jobs and road capacity for an additional 500,000 vehicles.

Meanwhile, the region's economy, which has for decades been grounded in the military, medicine, and tourism, faces increasing pressure from competition locally and globally. The need to re-equip the city's workforce has never been more critical, as San Antonio's new pillar industries – from cybersecurity to biosciences to advanced manufacturing – require a workforce that we are not importing nor creating in sufficient quantities.

And our natural environment, so long a strategic advantage, has begun to require more stewardship than our public policy has historically been willing to give it. We can no longer take for granted that water will be available and affordable forever, and we have to face that federal air pollution regulations will begin costing us a lot of money.

These are challenges we must plan to act on in 2016.



Erika Prosper (left), holds her son, Jonah, with her husband Councilman Ron Nirenberg (D8). Photo by Jonathan Alonzo.



## **Taking Deliberate Action**

By the time the first draft of the SA Tomorrow comprehensive plan is released in mid-2016, the 2017 Bond Program process will be well underway, with citizens, civic and business leaders, and City Council identifying our major capital improvement priorities. Scheduled for a May 2017 vote, the bond program will be our first and best effort to “put our money where our mouth is” when it comes to achieving the community’s vision for San Antonio. It should be focused on long term solutions, durable infrastructure projects, and SA Tomorrow should be the blueprint for all of that spending.



80/20 Foundation Operations Manager Emily Bowe (center) and TechBloc Executive Director Marina Gavito (right) listen in during an SA Tomorrow creative brainstorming session on sustainability. Photo by Scott Ball. Credit: Scott Ball / San Antonio Report

Two critical priorities already made clear during the SA Tomorrow planning process are improving community health and providing new, multimodal transportation solutions. The bond program should make significant progress on both, and in 2016, we must deliver a comprehensive and achievable multimodal transportation plan, one that connects our suburban communities with the urban core, leverages a better transit system, relieves traffic down the growing North/South corridor and truly transforms the way we do transportation in the nation's seventh largest

city. We shouldn't be afraid to talk about, ask the public about, or invest in any mode of transportation if it is comprehensive and addresses real mobility challenges.

Similarly, work to connect the Howard W. Peak Greenway Trails should not only continue, it should accelerate and expand. Voters in May 2015 approved the largest ever allocation to the linear creekways – a model project nationwide – and we should begin leveraging the network as one element of multimodal transportation system, not simply as a recreational amenity, connected to B-Cycle stations, community centers, neighborhoods, and commercial areas.

It is also vital that 2016 be the year we fully implement an early action air quality plan. While it is a virtual certainty that we will lose our attainment status in 2017 because we have exceeded the old standard since 2012, the further out of compliance San Antonio is, the costlier it becomes. The Austin region recently conducted an analysis that showed economic losses of up to \$40 Billion over a 30-year period if it was designated nonattainment. We can't afford what ignoring air quality would mean to public health nor our economy.

This kind of action, however, is not sustainable without finding harmony among countless – often duplicative or conflicting – economic development efforts in the region. We need to overhaul our priorities, tools, and rules for economic development agreements, so that while we attract jobs at all levels, we use every opportunity to seed growth of higher wage, emerging industries.

That's because nothing we do will be as important as cultivating a workforce that is ready for 21st century careers. In 2016, we need to unite the disparate partners in education – school districts to universities to community colleges to charters – on the goals of literacy, college and career readiness, and bridging the gap between the skills our workforce has and the skills they will soon need. Revitalization of the urban core and development of the south, west, and east sides – particularly housing construction – should be informed by what families and those schools need to succeed: a focus on housing that is safe, equitable, and affordable, with access to technology, child care, and public transportation.



Student Adam Arroyo works on a Jet Engine. Lockheed Martin's Kelly Aviation Center specializes in support of aircraft engines that power both military and

## Details We Can't Overlook

commercial aircraft. Photo courtesy Kelly Aviation Center.

SA2020 is a bold vision, and to be achieved through SA Tomorrow, it will require laser focus on the elements of a healthy community with healthy governance.

We can't overlook the fact that there is a large – and growing – portion of our community that is living on the outside of a great city and looking in. Nearly 20% of San Antonians – and roughly a quarter of all children – live at or below the federal poverty level. Parents are forced to spend more time away from their kids just to make ends meet, a leading indicator for low achievement and dropping out of high school. As the cost of living increases – from utility bills to rent in once-affordable neighborhoods – the challenges to those families and the community-at-large get too large for public policy to ignore. The building blocks to a healthy city must acknowledge that reality, and in 2016, they must also be dedicated to reversing it.

After working with local governments in over 20 cities across the country during my years at the Annenberg Public Policy Center, it is undeniable that a resilient city is also a civically engaged one. Our greatest, most precious resource in a democratic society – and one that has grown alarmingly scarce – is an active and informed citizen. Public participation was the fundamental upon which SA2020 was based, and the same is true for SA Tomorrow. What it reveals is that, like our dismal local election turnout, for myriad reasons, we have a crisis of public participation. That's why I started the discussion about moving municipal elections to November of even years, when we know participation is three to four times better. In 2016, we need to get serious about increasing civic engagement.



Rachel McDevitt holds her bike up just before casting her vote in the June 2015 election. Photo by Scott Ball.

What is also undeniable across our country is that there is a crisis of public trust that we should do everything we can to resolve. That's why I've repeatedly called for increasing transparency in our processes – from broadcasting Council B Sessions and SAWS board meetings to more public hearings on critical issues to open town halls at schools, restaurants, community centers, and online. I'm very pleased that city management will further lift the veil of city decision-making by placing audio transcripts of all council committee meetings online starting this month and that we will receive proposals for an open data platform for online access to detailed budget information in time for fiscal year 2017.

“Have you made the world better?”

That’s what my son Jonah asks me every day, his version of a performance evaluation.

In 30 years, Jonah will be my age, and he and his peers will have inherited a city that is markedly different than it is today. Whether we exert our influence to ensure that the intervening years are beneficial or destructive for that future, rests on our ability to make difficult choices now. While municipal government is structured around the short term, limited impact of district boundaries and two-year terms, we need to think big, act with purpose on the plan we establish, and govern for our children and grandchildren.

That’s the road ahead as I see it. In 2016, will you join us?

*\*Top image: Councilman Ron Nirenberg (D8) shows his son, Jonah, a map of San Antonio in City Hall. Photo by Jonathan Alonzo.*



GOV & POLITICS

# SA Tomorrow: It's Your Turn to Plan San Antonio's Future



by **Joan Vinson**

March 26, 2015



Mayor Ivy Taylor announced the SA Tomorrow kickoff, which will invite community members to become part of the SA Tomorrow initiative. Photo by Joan Vinson.

Elected officials, City staff, and business and institution leaders have been working for months formulating working groups and committees that make up the structure of the massively complex comprehensive plan for 2040. Now it's time for the community to play their part – and the City is asking for as much public input as possible.

By the year 2040, 25 years from now, the city's population is expected to grow by more than 1 million people. **SA Tomorrow** is a city-led effort to accommodate the future influx of these people.



The comprehensive planning process was initiated last year by Mayor Ivy Taylor and is a three-tiered planning effort – a comprehensive plan, a sustainability plan, and a transportation plan – that aims to guide the city toward sustainable growth.

On April 11, the SA Tomorrow team will host a kick-off event of its public input process at the [SAISD Alamo Convocation Center](#) and invites community members to enjoy mini workshops, kids' activities, family entertainment, door prizes, free helmets, and more.

Mayor Taylor said at a press conference on Wednesday that receiving input from San Antonio residents is a crucial aspect of the planning process.

“We will be hearing from you, our neighbors across San Antonio, families, business owners, and commuters who live, work, and play in our city everyday,” she said. “You’re the ones who know what’s working, what’s not, and you’re the only ones who can help us create an effective plan for the next 25 years.”

She gave an overview of the fundamental issues the plan addresses, which include widespread, relatable topics.

“Everyday we are considering, piecemeal, the very issues that need to be addressed more comprehensively,” Mayor Taylor said. “Questions like: Where are my aging parents going to live? How can I enjoy a night out on the town without having to drive, and what kind of community will my children want to live in when they grow up?”

The comprehensive plan will address how the layout of the city will look in 2040; the Multimodal Transportation Plan will analyze transportation methods to best meet community needs; and the Sustainability Plan will manage economic, environmental, and social resources.



[Click to enlarge.](#)



Councilmember Ron Nirenberg (D8) stood in front of City Hall on Wednesday to address the future of SA Tomorrow. Photo by Joan Vinson.

Councilmember Ron Nirenberg (D8) said that as a public official, he wants to take an active role in the future growth of the city – which is to plan for the long-term quality of life for everyone.

“By focusing our growth, we can ensure that everyone’s best interests are accounted for,” he said.

SA Tomorrow will set policies to help preserve our resources socially, economically, and environmentally, he said. It will help develop transit quarters that consider both present and future congestion because “It’s a true collaborative effort.”

Assistant Director of Traffic and Transportation Planning Terry Bellamy leads the coordination with the City of San Antonio’s major transportation partners.

He said he is trying to improve transportation in and around San Antonio by accounting for the time it takes to get from one point to another.

“Having that ability to get on one seat, no stop, makes a world of a difference,” he said. “That’s premium transit.”

He said he is also looking beyond transportation inside of San Antonio, and toward transportation between major Texas cities.

“One of the key things that is taking place in this region is the relationship between us and Austin, all the way up to Dallas, and over to Houston,” he said. “I think commuter rail will continue to be discussed and high speed rail we be discussed (at SA Tomorrow meetings).”

Residents are encouraged to follow SA Tomorrow on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), and to visit the SA Tomorrow [website](#) for more information on meeting times and locations.



Terry Bellamy,  
Assistant  
Director of  
Traffic and  
Transportation  
Planning.  
Courtesy  
photo.

*Featured/top image: Mayor Ivy Taylor announced the SA Tomorrow kickoff, which will invite community members to become part of the SA Tomorrow initiative. Photo by Joan Vinson.*