

Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff
State of the County Address
October 26, 2018

Bexar County presently has a population of approximately 2 million people. The San Antonio metro area is expected to grow by 1 million in next twenty years.

With the growth of a potentially new talented population, we have an opportunity to build a prosperous world class city if we work together to put in place ingredients for success.

I submit to you for your consideration five most important components:

1. Expand public/private transit options along with road infrastructure
2. Enhance public safety by reforming criminal justice to focus on rehabilitation
3. Create teams of maternal, neonatal, and pediatric physicians to focus on unique needs of moms and children.
4. Fund and expand talent development programs
5. Create an entrepreneurial city.

Expand public/private transit options along with road infrastructure

We need a consumer and choice-driven public transit system focused on mobility, innovation, efficiency, and decongestion. To improve service delivery and reduce system costs, the current fixed-route bus system must evolve into a truly multi-modal system.

VIA should re-allocate resources to create a demand driven transit system in a partnership with the private sector that would operate on select routes and also connect the first and last mile. Partner with firms like Lyft, Uber, Bridj, and Chariot that use cars, vans, small shuttle buses, autonomous vehicles, bikes, scooters, and e-bikes. The County will be going out for a transit proposal giving employees options, public and private to use any of the options I just mentioned.

The County has appointed 3 new VIA board members--oldest is 36; youngest is 26-- to encourage a more innovated transit system. VIA is getting on the right road, implementing a bike program and a pilot program with Lyft.

But VIA needs to get more aggressive in offering other transit choices and show us concrete results. The task force that Mayor Nirenberg and I appointed has recommended a November 2019 election to address transportation. The proposal will include a trackless rapid transit to run on a HOV managed lanes lane. But without connections to other modalities of transit, it will not be successful.

The County's role will be to address road infrastructure to accommodate transit. Our Alamo Regional Mobility Authority has already partnered with TXDOT to deliver 14 regional projects totaling \$179 million. We have also invested a total of \$262 million on 1604, IH 10 and HWY 281. Two of the three, IH 10 and HWY 281, are presently being built with HOV lanes. On

the third, TXDOT has plans to widen 1604 to include HOV lanes. They are building an elevated section on IH 35 that will include HOV lanes.

A source of funding for new road projects will be the Alamo Regional Mobility Authority, Road and Bridge Fund, and Pass Through financing in partnership with TXDOT.

Thank you Commissioner Kevin Wolff, Chairman of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, VIA CEO Jeff Arndt, County Manager David Smith, and County Public Works Director Renee Green, Mario Jorge, San Antonio District Engineer for TXDOT and Bruce Bugg, Chairman of Texas Transportation Commission.

Enhance public safety by reforming criminal justice to focus on rehabilitation

We need to enhance public safety by reforming criminal justice to focus on rehabilitation. Jails are crime schools. After the first day you enter there is a 10% chance you will be back. In 3 days or more there is a 30-40% chance you will be back. The longer you stay the greater percentage you will return.

Also, the longer a low risk offender is in jail they are more likely to lose their job, their home and their vehicle. Studies have shown it takes up to five years for a person to recover financially from the loss.

Jails should be for violent offenders that present a threat to the public, not for non-violent offenders. Probation and work release are better ways to punish. Those that are addicted to drugs or mentally ill should be treated.

In my first year as County Judge, we created the first drug court. Now we have 7 drug courts, 4 mental health courts including 8 juvenile courts and 3 veteran courts.

A year ago we opened a re-entry center to help inmates re-enter society. Already we have seen reduced recidivism. Additionally, a 150-bed work release center will open by the end of this year.

Commissioner Tommy Calvert has created a Second Chance Job Fair. Held a few weeks ago, the Third Annual Second Chance Job Fair had over 100 companies participated in hiring former inmates.

We'll be working with the legislature next year on bail bond reform.

Just last Tuesday the Commissioners Court authorized our Public Defenders Office, subject to the approval of the judges, to represent people at magistration hearing creating a more fair and just process for everyone.

The Center for Health Care Services and Bexar County will soon open a 93,000 sq. ft. Clinic on W. Commerce, a few blocks from the jail, which will provide services for drug addiction and mental health issues.

Bexar County's new Justice Intake and Assessment Center is scheduled to open in December 2018. The \$32 million 512 inmate bed facility and assessment center will include "open booking" allowing arrestees to meet with pretrial services, medical staff, mental health clinicians and public defenders to provide a direct pathway to treatment services.

The ability to have more time to interview and assess individuals will increase diversions by 15%. A 15% increase equates to over \$3.1 million a year in cost avoidance in jail processing costs.

Criminal justice reform improves public safety, lowers costs and is the right thing to do.

Thank you to Mike Lozito, Director of Judicial Services, Michael Young, Chief Public Defender, Gilbert Gonzales, Director of Behavioral & Mental Health Dept, and Sheriff Salazar.

We must address the opioid crisis before it overwhelms our criminal justice system.

Over 73,000 people died from overdose of opioids, more each year than all our soldiers who died in Vietnam. Many of the deaths have occurred from prescribed opioids.

The Bexar County Commissioners Court in June 2017 created the joint opioid task force.

The Task Force has received federal grants to purchase of 16,000 doses of the reversal drug, naloxone. The hospital emergency rooms have adopted voluntary guidelines for the prescription of opioids.

Public service announcements are airing 30 commercials that warn parents about the danger of leaving unused medication in homes where adolescents are present.

The Task Force has received \$20 million in grants for treatment.

Bexar County has sued dozens of manufacturers and distributors of opioids for negligence and deceptive trade practices in the distribution of opioids. The proceeds from this lawsuit will fund a comprehensive prevention and treatment program.

Thank you to Co-Chairs Dr. Colleen Bridger and Dr. Bryan Alsip and my chief of staff T.J. Mays for the great work they are doing.

While we will continue to address rehabilitation issues we are also expanding our Sheriff's department. Two new Sheriff substations will open before the end of the year. We have increased patrol officers by 19.

Thank you to Commissioner Sergio "Chico" Rodriguez and Sheriff Salazar.

Create teams of maternal, neonatal, and pediatric physicians to focus on unique needs of moms and children.

To get newborns off to a good start in life mothers must receive the best of pre-natal care, and follow up care. Babies must be treated early on for any challenges they may face. Without a good start in life, numerous health issues will arise.

To attract back a first class pediatric program in 2008, Commissioners Court invested \$900 million in the Bexar County hospital, dba as University Health System, for a new 1 million sq. ft. 20-story Sky Tower and our new downtown 6-story clinic.

With our pediatric program in place, Commissioners Court authorized bonds to build a new Women's and Children's Hospital. It will be the only hospital solely focused on women and children in our city. The project will be built without a tax increase.

The new hospital will focus on the unique needs of moms and children. A team of maternal, neonatal and pediatric specialists, led by UT Health San Antonio physician experts, will work together to care for mother and baby through every step before, during and after pregnancy. After-birth follow up services are available in our outlying clinics.

The new hospital will provide state-of-the-art facilities for University Hospital's busy Level IV NICU, a dedicated pediatric emergency department.

The new NICU facilities are important to address babies born addicted to opioids. Bexar County leads the state in neonatal abstinence syndrome. Over 300 babies a year are born in San Antonio with opioid addiction. They must be treated immediately and be given the care they need to become healthy.

The Women's and Children's Hospital is in the design stage now. Construction starts next year.

Thank you Commissioner Paul Elizondo, President George Hernandez and the Board of Managers led by Chairman Jim Adams and UT Health Science President Bill Heinrich.

Fund and create talent development programs

We must we must develop talent, attract talent and retain talent.

1. The Economic Development Foundation for the first time ever has taken the lead on employer driven training programs through SA Works.
2. Public education is on the right path. They are stepping up to create programs that prepare students for work, industry certificates, dual credits, charter schools like CAST, Health Careers, Advance Manufacturing.
3. Alamo College District – City's most important work force training, Alamo Academies, one year certificates, Associates degrees.
4. To expand and enhance training programs, the State must increase funding for public education both at K-12 and the Junior College District- instead the state has been decreasing school funding while raising taxes at the local level. We need to encourage the Legislature to do what is right for education.

5. Highest number of registered cyberpatriot teams.
6. Highest number of NSA and DHS-designated Centers for Academic Excellence.
7. Build Sec Foundry, the first and only cybersecurity startup incubator in the State of Texas.
8. Universities and colleges- 150,000 students- UTSA -cyber security
9. Bibliotech-teaching tech, internet connectivity and accessing information. Thank you to my wife Tracy Wolff for raising the funds for Bibliotech.
10. Businesses are stepping up to do more training.
 - A. TX FAME sponsoring students through a 2-year associate's degree in Advanced Manufacturing Technology.
 - B. Apprenticeship program.
 - C. Summer interns. Last year over 1000 summer interns participates in public and private company programs
 - D. Private sector code up and cloud academies
11. In this year's budget, the Commissioners Court provided funding for a center for veterans transitioning out of the military. Located outside the Ft. Sam gate it will be the first direct pipeline to helping them secure employment in san Antonio. It will open on November 12 of this year.

Thank Commissioner Kevin Wolff; David Marquez and Deborah Carter, just recently joined us as Director of Economic Development.

Across the board, we need to continue to step up scope and pace on talent development programs.

Create an entrepreneurial city

With strong talent development programs in place we need to create as friendly business environment. That means less regulation and holding down taxes.

Over last 20 years reduce tax rate from 38 cents to 31 cents.

Triple A bond rating from Standard & Poors, Moody, and Finch.

To foster economic expansion the City and County must continue to invest in infrastructure such as streets, roads, highways, and flood control and provide affordable housing through tax incentives.

We must support our growing tech industry- via the County's \$1 million annual Innovation Fund.

We're attracting major firms such Ernst and Young and OKIN BPS that have high-paying jobs related to tech. Between two firms, they are bringing 2500 jobs.

We must initiate strong calling programs on tech business in other cities.

Last Tuesday the Commissioners court approved making available land on the san Pedro creek to utsa for a business school. On adjacent land the City approved their land to UTSA for a School of Data Science and Cyber Security Collaboration Center.

To create an entrepreneurial city, we must create, link and expand urban nodes that offer exciting choices where people live, work, and play.

The central city is rapidly changing to offer an exciting life style.

County has made investments in San Pedro Creek, San Antonio River, Tobin Center, the Alameda Theater, Hemisfair Park and numerous housing units.

On May 5, 2018, Bexar County and the San Antonio River Authority completed the first section of a world-class linear park from Fox Tech to Houston street. It included flood control benefits, enhanced water quality, and featured colorful artistic and architectural design enhancements. The under-construction Frost Bank sits on its banks.

Now working on next section of the project, which extends from Houston street to Nueva street. The soon to be renovated Alameda Theater and UTSA's exciting new downtown campus expansion will be on this section.

Bexar County, the City, the Alameda Theater Conservancy, and Texas Public Radio (TPR), are restoring the Alameda Theater, the cultural treasure of our community.

It is anticipated that the entire Alameda Theater project will be completed by the end of 2020.

Thank you to Commissioner Paul Elizondo.

Near south of downtown is a rapidly growing urban node. The County invested \$200 million on the Mission Reach of the river that led to a UNESCO designation of the missions as a World Heritage site. Numerous housing units are being built.

The County will open by the end of the year its first culture park along the Mission Reach. The site includes the ruins of the 1886 Hot Wells resort where many famous guests, such as Teddy Roosevelt and Rudolph Valentino came to use the hot sulfur spring waters to cure their ills.

The ruins are being stabilized, landscaping, entrance to the river, a vegetable garden. The Hot Wells Conservancy will offer educational programs, host tours, and show silent movies.

Another urban center further south is Brooks City Base that is continuing to expand its node. Texas A&M University and Palo Alto College has the opportunity to create an urban center.

Thank you to Commissioner Sergio "Chico" Rodriquez

Commerce is the spine that can connect the central city urban area to the east and west. West Commerce that includes development around the UTSA campus, and further west at Our Lady of the Lake University.

East Commerce links central city to the redevelopment around Dignowity Hills and then further east out to the Bexar County Arena, Coliseum and Expo Hall where Commissioner Calvert is leading effort to development plans for onsite development as well as off site.

Thank you Commissioner Calvert.

Broadway going north is transforming rapidly. Near town includes Museum of Art, the Pearl, thousands of housing units and three new office buildings. Middle Broadway includes the Doseum, the Witte, and Brackenridge park.

Further north, Broadway- Alamo Heights-Quarry, and McNay offer an exciting place to live.

From south to north and east to west, we need to continue to support these urban nodes by addressing flood control, extension of complete streets, transit options and economic incentives.

La Cantera, UTSA, and the Rim are other exciting urban areas. We need to connect to downtown with passenger rail along the existing Kerrville line. We need to work with Union Pacific and with the two quarries.

Conclusion

Let's get down to business and work our way towards a world class city that offers all our citizens an opportunity to prosper by having a great start on life with a first class women's and children's health program, a great education opportunity, a safer city by reform criminal justice to heal and rehabilitate, developing a first class public transit system along with infrastructure, and creating an entrepreneurial city that offers high paying job opportunities.