

BEXAR COUNTY
CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

PLAN FOR CITY-COUNTY COOPERATION

FISCAL YEAR 2002

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INTRODUCTION

Bexar County ("the County") and the City of San Antonio ("the City") are two separate governments serving largely the same citizens and area. The City makes up about 80% of the County's total population and three-quarters of the County's tax base. Those 80% of citizens pay taxes to both governments and receive services from both governments.

The City and County governments have separate foundations in the Texas Constitution, and as a result they have radically different internal structures. The County, as a subdivision of the State government, is subject to numerous constitutional and legislative mandates and restraints. In contrast, the City is a "home rule" municipality with the power to write its own charter. And alongside the principal city, Bexar County has more than 20 separately incorporated suburban municipalities.

The City and the County also differ substantially in their revenue structures. The City has a diversified revenue base which includes the sales tax and the City Public Service payment alongside the property tax, while the County is almost entirely limited to the property tax.

Yet despite these differences in legal structure and revenue sources, metropolitan San Antonio is an integrated multi-county region economically and socially. It needs to become equally integrated governmentally.

City Council and Commissioners Court both recognize that to achieve this kind of governmental integration, a deliberate, multi-year planning effort is required. We must first agree on the general principles and strategies that will guide our effort to integrate City and County services. We must elaborate on these principles in greater detail as we go. And we must agree on an annual work program that lays out the steps we intend to accomplish within particular timeframes, so we can measure our progress and move steadily toward achieving our vision more fully.

This document is the first step in that direction. It is an initial expression by the Bexar County Commissioners Court and the San Antonio City Council of our joint commitment to create a more seamless and integrated structure of local government. It sets out our vision for City-County government at the beginning of the 21st century and the mission we are pursuing in this initiative. It sets out some principles of general policy that both governing bodies agree will guide this effort. As this effort continues, Commissioners Court and City Council will agree on additional "general policy principles" whenever common or recurring issues are uncovered.

Attached to these elements of agreement is a specific "work program" that the staffs of both governments will work to implement during 2002, developing particular agreements within the general policy principles. Each element of this work program contains a target date for completion. On the foundation of our progress on this initial work program, City Council and Commissioners Court will then adopt a more detailed plan and extend the work program as a "rolling plan" for subsequent years. In the future we also will attempt to coordinate the work program with our annual budget cycle and we will use the Vision, Mission and General Principles as guides in developing agreements with other local governments.

VISION

- We envision a system of local government that is as integrated in the delivery of public services as the metropolitan region is integrated economically and socially.
- We envision a system that delivers services seamlessly, without duplication or overlap, and without bureaucratic boundaries that impede service delivery.
- We envision a system that is as efficient as possible, minimizing the total tax burden on our community.
- We envision a system that is as effective as possible, maximizing actual service delivery.
- We envision a system that is transparent to the average citizen, who does not care what agency or level of government is actually responsible for delivering a needed service.
- We envision a system that is equitable to taxpayers and citizens both inside and outside the city limits.
- We envision a system that is accountable for results in actual service delivery to the taxpayers who support both governments.

MISSION

We will create an environment of City/County government that is transparent to the citizens and seamless in service delivery - efficient, effective, equitable and accountable to all citizens of San Antonio and Bexar County – while recognizing the different structures we are required to observe.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The City of San Antonio and Bexar County agree on the following general principles as policy to govern the development of particular individual efforts to improve City-County service delivery.

- A principal objective is to maximize the efficiency of local government and to minimize the total tax burden *of the community as a whole*, rather than to seek a budgetary advantage for one government at the expense of the other.
- At a minimum, each agreement between the City and the County will maintain the existing quality of the service that is delivered to citizens. We will strive to enhance the quality and effectiveness of existing services at reduced cost to the taxpayer.
- Whenever City and County services are delivered directly to citizens on some combined or cooperative basis, we will measure service outputs and we will apply performance standards to ensure that services are delivered effectively and equitably to citizens both inside and outside the city limits.
- Benefits to either government in the form of increased efficiency or effectiveness in an existing service will accrue to the community as a whole.
- In sharing costs for new initiatives, we will attempt to split the cost on the simplest measurable terms.
- The City and the County will strive to keep each other up to date on issues and projects of common interest, especially those that could impact revenues. Each government will provide information requested by the other in a timely and complete manner.

2002 WORK PROGRAM

Existing City-County Contracts

Until now, the City and the County have provided services to each other under a series of separate contracts authorized by the Interlocal Cooperation Act. Some well-known examples of the City providing service to the County are the contracts that make the San Antonio Public Library available to citizens outside the city limits and that provide for animal control in the unincorporated area. In the opposite direction, the City contracts with the County for property tax collection and for certain forensic services by the Forensic Science Center.

- As existing City-County contracts expire, each new contract will provide for automatic annual renewal (subject to annual appropriations by the governing bodies) for a minimum of five years unless either government gives notice to the other of a desire to terminate or renegotiate the contract at least six months before the contract's renewal date. Each contract will also require that negotiations for renewal begin at least six months before the end of the final year of the contract term. These will be standard provisions in all future City-County service contracts.
- As existing contracts expire, renewal contracts will attempt to minimize the frequency of reporting requirements on units of service provided. New contracts will emphasize performance measures and reporting on effectiveness in terms that are meaningful to the citizen.

Subdivision Plat Approval in the ETJ

Presently, both Commissioners Court and the City Planning Commission are required to approve subdivision plats within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction. H.B. 1445, 77th Legislature, requires the City and the County to enter into an agreement before April 1, 2002 to eliminate this duplicative approval process.

- The County will undertake a thorough review and revision of its subdivision standards with the intention of incorporating as County standards the provisions of the City's revised Unified Development Code, unless a compelling case can be made for requiring different or lesser standards. Commissioners Court will adopt these revised subdivision standards by the end of March 2002.
- We will adopt the required agreement on subdivision regulation in the City's ETJ by the statutory deadline. We anticipate that this agreement will provide for a single point of submission in the City Development Services Department and for joint staff review and coordination of subdivision plat approvals in the ETJ.

Emergency Preparedness

The events of September 11, 2001, have highlighted the need for a more robust capability to manage any kind of local emergency. Bexar County and the City of San Antonio will create a seamless, comprehensive, coordinated emergency operating system, capable of responding to all national disasters or attacks by chemical, biological, or nuclear agents, or by any other terrorist actions.

- Create a combined partnership between the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, and the incorporated cities within Bexar County to achieve a singular, coordinated emergency management operation;
- Provide for this partnership to be ongoing Emergency Management Office;
- Provide a new and/or expanded site for the combined City-County Emergency Operations Center by considering all possible locations which are secure and defensible;
- Create a redundant backup system to the combined City-County Operations Center;
- Enhance communications between front-line responders and make possible rapid emergency notification to citizens;
- Build on existing partnerships within the community to provide more efficient and comprehensive response to disasters;
- Provide for emergency response equipment, training, and exercises; and
- Provide law enforcement the necessary tools and manpower to effectively uncover, assess, and investigate terrorist activity.

The estimated cost to achieve these goals is approximately \$66,288,000.

Magistration/Pretrial Processes

Since Bexar County was forced by federal court order to stop accepting public inebriates at the County jail, the City and the County have developed partly overlapping and duplicative systems for identifying and processing persons who are brought in under arrest. This problem has been complicated by the mandate of S.B. 7, which increases the County's obligations to provide counsel for indigent defendants. Reducing this duplication would lead to better utilization of expensive jail beds and return law enforcement officers to the field more quickly.

- The City and County are developing a plan to eliminate this duplication by locating certain operations of the Sheriff's Department and the Pre-Trial Services Office at the Frank Wing Municipal Courts Building by the end of FY 2002.
- Prior to adoption of our FY 2003 budgets, we will evaluate the improvements that this plan makes to the magistration system and study the issue of streamlining the collection of fees related to the magistration process.

SBC Center

The County-owned SBC Center, scheduled to open in October 2002, will add to the inventory of publicly-owned venues which includes the County's Freeman Coliseum complex as well as the City's Alamodome, Convention Center, Lila Cockrell Theater and Municipal Auditorium. The City and the County, along with the State and the Metropolitan Planning Organization, are working together to make improvements in and around the SBC Center.

- By March 2002, we will agree on the schedule and phasing of the Houston Street road improvements.
- By the end of September 2002, we will resolve all issues related to SBC Center traffic control and off-site parking regulation, and be ready to implement the required programs.
- During 2002, we will begin developing a plan to coordinate the marketing of City- and County-owned event venues.
- During 2002, we will begin to examine the feasibility of formulating a plan to coordinate the use of common facility\shared services for large City- and County-owned event venues.

Drainage and Flood Control

Historically, the County has financed flood control programs through a countywide property tax that is legally earmarked for that purpose, and it has implemented flood control projects (principally along the San Antonio River and its immediate tributaries) by contract with the San Antonio River Authority (SARA). The City has financed drainage projects through general obligation bond programs and it has implemented these projects through the City Public Works Department. The City also finances certain stormwater quality protection programs and related public education programs through a "stormwater fee."

Following the flood of October 1998, the City and the County created a Countywide Citizens Watershed Master Plan Committee to develop an integrated City-County approach to drainage and flood control. In February 2001, that committee recommended the creation of a single entity, structure or system to centralize the authority, responsibility and accountability for flood control and to promote a more regional focus on drainage issues. A follow-up City-County Joint Review Team of staff and citizens has developed an Action Plan to further refine and implement these recommendations. City Council, Commissioners Court, and the San Antonio River Authority's Board of Directors all approved this plan in November 2001.

Alongside this initiative, the City and the County are both facing the deadline of a federal mandate to implement Phase II of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). This will require the County to monitor the quality of stormwater runoff in the area outside the City's previously permitted area.

These on-going efforts need to be recognized and continued within the framework of this general plan for City-County cooperation. Therefore the City and the County agree on the following targets under this heading.

- We will pursue the work of the "Action Plan for Implementation of Recommendations of the Countywide Citizens Watershed Master Plan Committee" on the schedule outlined in that document. We will work with SARA and other stakeholders to complete an agreement on the creation of a unified regional management program for flood control by June 2002, to be implemented in the City's and the County's FY 2003 budgets.
- We will also complete and adopt an agreement on NPDES stormwater quality by the required federal permit deadline (1st quarter of 2003). This will include an efficient and equitable countywide financing mechanism for stormwater programs.

Decentralized Service Access

The City and the County both have multiple "satellite offices" to make citizen access more convenient for various individual services. The City has also developed a network of Community Link kiosks to provide information and support a range of transactions with the City government and a related network of Community Link Service Centers (CLSC's) to facilitate citizen access to the entire range of City services. Most recently, we have agreed to provide access to the County's website through the City kiosks.

- By the end of March 2002, we will establish a joint staff planning team to develop the next generation of kiosk services to fully and seamlessly integrate access to both governments. This system will kiosk-enable as many web-based transactions as possible with the City and the County, including electronic payments of fees. The planning effort will develop the specifications for a next generation system and a proposed agreement to share the costs between the City and County governments.
- By the end of May 2002, we will also launch a joint planning effort to study the integration of County government services within the scope of services afforded by the Community Link Service Centers. This could lead to the development of a City-County contract that provides for cross-trained employees to be located in the City's CLSC's and that would be implemented during FY 2003.
- By the end of 2002, we will undertake a systematic study of the location of decentralized City and County service offices and develop a plan to co-locate these facilities to the maximum degree possible in the future.
- By the end of 2002, we will initiate a feasibility study of expanding the City's 3-1-1 system to include direct access to the entire County government. If a decision is made to proceed, we anticipate developing an appropriate agreement during FY 2003.

Parks and Recreation

The City and the County both operate park systems. All but one of the County's parks are inside the city limits. City and County parks are completely indistinguishable from the average citizen's standpoint. We have created a joint system for reservation of park pavilions through a City-County contract. We have cooperated in the acquisition and development of Walker Ranch Park. Most recently, we have consolidated the maintenance and operation of Mission and Padre Parks. The implementation of the City's Proposition 3 sales tax initiative, to acquire additional open space within the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone and along Leon and Salado Creeks, presents new opportunities for City-County cooperation.

- By January 2003, we will adopt an agreement to coordinate the development of linear City and County parks along Salado Creek.
- Before the end of 2002, we will develop a coordination process to maximize the use of joint or coordinated applications for State and grant funds for City and County parks.
- By January 2003, we will issue a joint request for proposals for qualifications of the conceptual design of Main Plaza/Plaza de las Islas and we will adopt an agreement on development of the Courthouse "front yard" on the City property fronting the courthouse along the southern edge of Main Plaza.

San Antonio History Center

In January 2002, the Mayor and the County Judge appointed a blue-ribbon task force to coordinate a feasibility study of a San Antonio History Center in the space occupied by the Hertzberg Circus Collection and Museum. This would showcase the history of San Antonio/Bexar County for scholars, researchers, genealogists, students, tourists and the general public. Its collections may include historic documents and other materials now held by the City Clerk, County Clerk, District Clerk and local agencies and organizations, along with historic photographs, the scrapbooks and personal papers of community leaders, and other artifacts and ephemeral materials related to the region's history. The City and the County have each budgeted \$25,000 in FY 2002 to support this initial study effort.

- By the end of FY 2002, this task force will refine the concept for the History Center, research potential funding sources, and develop a proposed partnership structure for implementation including the City and County governments along with related public and nonprofit agencies and The University of Texas System. We will determine the magnitude of the investment that will be required for rehabilitation of the Hertzberg building. We will also research and develop the agreements that may be necessary for the legal custodians of hard copy public records to make the materials under their control more accessible to the public.

Housing Services

The City and County have a common interest in community development and neighborhood revitalization. They operate a parallel array of related non-profit corporations and financing mechanisms for low to moderate income housing. Some of these efforts appear to be duplicative in nature.

During FY 2002 & 2003, perform a staff study of potential opportunities for comprehensive service delivery. Areas to be studied involve those where similar services are provided and may be a duplication:

- Homebuyer counseling – At present the City and numerous non-profit organizations provide homebuyer counseling services. The County is also starting its own homebuyer counseling program.
- Loan servicing – Same as above, the City and several non-profit organizations provide this service, typically in the form of down payment assistance. The County is instituting its own program.
- Housing Finance Corporations – The City and County operate separate housing finance corporations. Likewise, the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) has its own housing finance corporation. The fact that multiple housing finance corporations co-exist is not necessarily a negative. It may mean that more funds are accessible by the local community. What may be needed is a clearer understanding of the respective roles that each plays, e.g., securing financing opportunities for multi-family versus single-family projects.
 - Mortgage Revenue Program
 - Non-profit, 501(c)(3) Bond Program
 - State Volume Cap Bond Program
- Public housing authorities – Two public housing authorities, SAHA and the Housing Authority of Bexar County (HABC), administer public and assisted housing programs that serve residents of Bexar County. SAHA's board of directors is appointed by the City Council of San Antonio. Bexar County's Commissioners Court appoints HABC's board. Both authorities have overlapping service areas and share a cooperative agreement that allows Section 8 participants the freedom of residential choice within the entire county. No discernible difference exists in the types of persons and families served by either authority. A note of caution is that any study of the public housing authorities must contain a review of historical efforts to consolidate program operations, such as SAHA's previous efforts to administer HABC's Section 8 program. Why this effort was terminated must be thoroughly evaluated to avoid a repeat of past obstacles and/or mistakes.
- Beginning FY 2002, collaborate in the development of local housing plans:
 - San Antonio's Housing Master Plan – Update and implement strategies in this plan to also include County and small city issues. This will render a more comprehensive document and truer indicator of the area's housing system and potential.

- Federally mandated housing plans – Explore the feasibility and authority to co-develop the following federally mandated plans:
 - Consolidated Plan – As recipient of federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under its entitlement communities program, Bexar County and the City of San Antonio are required to conduct a comprehensive assessment of housing and community development needs, as well as identify strategies and goals to meet these needs. This assessment is to cover a three to five year period. At present, each entity develops its own plan. In the last plan development, each entity had representatives of the other in its respective planning committees. Nonetheless, the planning processes were separate and distinct. Ultimately, each entity receives its own entitlement funds to be expended within its own participating jurisdiction.
 - Fair Housing Plan (Analysis of Impediments) – As above, each entitlement community is required to develop An Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice. This planning process is not as rigid as the Consolidated Plan and may be more amenable to joint development.
- Beginning FY 2002, collaborate in initiatives that support an efficient and effective City-County housing program:
 - Where appropriate, develop a City-County approved federal and state legislative package on housing issues.
 - Review role of non-traditional housing models (features) in housing development efforts, e.g., greenbuild, universal design, etc.
 - Consider joint submittals of grant applications pertaining to lead based paint abatement, housing rehabilitation programs, etc.
- Before the end of FY 2002, develop and implement a program to return tax-foreclosed properties to the tax rolls
- Beginning FY 2002, create a Housing Funders Collaborative to meet on an “as needed” basis to develop a comprehensive inventory of projects that are seeking funding from all sources for operating and programmatic support.
- Beginning FY 2002, City and County staff will coordinate TIF related activities by:
 - Designating a single person from each respective staff to receive and send all information pertaining to TIF projects.
 - Establishing monthly meetings to discuss and reconcile all pending projects.
 - Providing a joint report that summarizes the status of all TIF projects that are to be presented to city council and commissioners court.
 - Starting the communication process between City and County departments early in the application process, i.e., “scrub team” level.

Metropolitan Partnership for Energy

The City and the County have recently entered into a partnership with City Public Service to create a Metropolitan Partnership for Energy with a mission to increase community energy efficiency and the utilization of renewable energy resources.

- We will evaluate the initial achievements of this partnership during FY 2002 and adjust its structure and mission as necessary in developing our FY 2003 budgets. This will include consideration of restructuring Project WARM in some relationship to the Energy Partnership.

Purchasing and General Services

By the nature of our two local governments, the City and the County must both undertake many of the same kinds of internal service functions. We have already cooperated, along with other local agencies, in creating a combined office for certification of small, minority and women-owned businesses as potential local government contractors. There is obvious potential for additional economies through further cooperation.

- During FY 2002, we will study the feasibility of achieving economies in County fleet maintenance by having the County contract with the City for this service. If the results of this study are favorable, we anticipate execution of a contract for this service before the end of calendar year 2002.

San Antonio Mobility Coalition

The City and County have joined with members from the business community to create the San Antonio Mobility Coalition. The Coalition's mission is to facilitate communication among public and private entities; expedite the Metropolitan Planning Organization's 25-year plan and to serve as advocates to bring additional State and Federal transportation funds to our community.

- During FY 2002, we will actively participate in this new organization to develop strategies to achieve the Coalition's goal of improving our community's transportation infrastructure.

Legislative Program

Necessarily, the City Council and the Commissioners Court will both give systematic attention to our projected legislative programs in the 2003 Legislature. While we have cooperated informally in supporting elements of each other's agendas in the past, in 2003 we will improve our coordination in supporting our respective agendas and strive to eliminate inconsistent or conflicting legislative objectives.

- In planning our 2003 legislative programs, we will examine the need for specific new or amended legislation to support greater City-County governmental cooperation. We will adopt a joint program on this issue and pursue it as a high priority.

Emerging Issues

In order to create a truly seamless and integrated system of local government, the entire range of City and County operations should be examined for opportunities to improve cooperation in service delivery. Therefore, in addition to the issues addressed above, during FY 2002 we will initiate staff discussions of the following "emerging issues." These will be addressed further in the future updates of this plan.

- Appropriate principles and methodology for measuring and applying incremental costs, service availability costs and indirect costs, and the most appropriate measure of inflation to use in all future City-County contracts.
- The feasibility of developing a coordinated "next generation" dispatch system for the Sheriff's Department and the City Police and Fire Departments. This will include exploration of the alternatives for structuring such a system to provide system redundancy and the ability to communicate between agencies, and the integration of this system with the Bexar Metro 911 network.
- The feasibility of a combined emergency computer back-up center.
- The potential for economies in park maintenance through some form of City-County agreement.
- Opportunities for greater cooperation in health and human services, including assistance to low-income citizens, HIV/AIDS services, and sharing of records between City and County agencies.
- The potential for greater cooperation between the Municipal Courts and the City's Code Compliance Department and the County's Dispute Resolution Center.
- The potential benefits of collaboration in personnel recruitment, applicant processing, training and employee services.
- The potential for some form of City-County cooperation in environmental services including household hazardous waste collection and recycling.
- Measures to improve coordination in the development and implementation of economic development incentives.

- Creation of a City-County Commission on Elderly Affairs to advise, advocate and provide information on issues of health care, job training, affordable housing and transportation as they affect the elderly.
- Assessment of the need to integrate County services within the City's One-Stop Development and Business Services Center and formulation of appropriate plans.