

ICMA Community Partnership Award – City of San Antonio Nomination on the World Heritage Nomination Process

The San Antonio Missions World Heritage site is one of the newest United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage designations, and the first in Texas. The San Antonio Missions are a culturally significant treasure, referring to five frontier mission complexes and a ranch, founded during the early 18th century by Franciscan missionaries along the San Antonio River. Although each was founded independently, the missions were and continue to be tied together by the river and its waters. Even today, the tangible remnants of the interweaving of cultures, the Spanish colonial and the indigenous peoples, can be seen in the decorative elements of the churches, the architecture, and the substantial remains of the water distribution systems (acequias) that remain in operation today. These mission complexes formed the foundation of the modern city of San Antonio. Now a city with a population of 1.4 million, San Antonio is the second largest in the state and the seventh largest city in the U.S., welcoming over 34 million visitors annually.

Problem Assessment:

The San Antonio Missions have brought together unlikely allies, from their establishment to modern times. In the early 1920's, when a building boom was transforming San Antonio into the largest metropolis in Texas, the widening of streets and building of skyscrapers threatened some of the City's most precious cultural and historic assets. In response to this threat, a group of women rallied together, knowing that saving San Antonio's iconic history was key to the future economic health of our city. Shortly thereafter, during the Great Depression, the restoration of these historic assets that would eventually become a World Heritage site, began through the Works

Progress Administration, City and County governments, and private citizens. And again in 1978, it was the unique partnership of the Archdiocese of San Antonio and the Department of the Interior that allowed four of the five missions to become a National Park.

Inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list can be a catalyst for socio-economic change. Pursuing designation led to a large collaborative community partnership to be formed in 2006, known as the San Antonio Missions World Heritage Working Committee. The road to designation was a 9-year effort, including local experts and historians, direct stakeholders and landowners, and all levels of government, including: Archdiocese of San Antonio, Bexar County, City of San Antonio, San Antonio River Authority, San Juan Ditch Corporation, Espada Ditch Company, Texas General Land Office, Texas Historical Commission, and the U.S. National Park Service. It also involved a number of nonprofits, community groups and educational Institutions.

After submitting a Tentative List nomination to the National Park Service in 2007, the San Antonio Missions were selected as one of 14 sites on the new U.S. Tentative List for World Heritage Sites. Thereafter between 2008 and 2011, the local working group continued to lead research efforts, including anthropological and archeological work throughout the missions.

In June 2012, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced that the San Antonio Missions were selected to be the next U.S. site to be nominated for World Heritage Site status. Subsequently, the San Antonio Missions World Heritage Advisory Committee was formed with representatives from the Working Committee. The advisory committee met over 40 times throughout the nomination process, and from 2012 to

2015, initiated a public input process that included various stakeholder groups including mission descendants, non-federally recognized indigenous groups, neighborhood associations, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, rotary clubs, and visiting international delegations. As a result, this community-wide process for nomination has been identified as a best practice and is currently being used as the model for other potential sites considering nomination.

Program Implementation and Costs:

There was broad-based State and local support from community leaders and businesses for San Antonio Missions nomination. In-kind support for the nomination from local government and organizations was greater than \$600,000, and over \$275,000 in financial support was raised.

In 2013, Bexar County commissioned a report that stated that if the designation of the San Antonio Missions would generate between \$44 and \$105 million in additional economic activity revenue, 500 to 1,000 newly created jobs, and up to \$2 million in local hotel tax revenue over the next decade. The local investment was greatly boosted by improvements to seven miles of the San Antonio River, including hike and bike trails connecting the five Missions and a \$246 million river ecosystem restoration project encompassing over 2,000 acres and a Spanish Colonial demonstration farm at Mission San Juan.

Tangible results or measurable outcomes of the program:

On July 5, 2015, UNESCO inscribed the San Antonio Missions – Mission San Antonio de Valero, Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción, Mission San José y San

Miguel de Aguayo, Mission San Juan Capistrano, and Mission San Francisco de la Espada – onto the list of World Heritage Sites. The missions, a serial designation with multiple property owners, represent the first and only World Heritage Site in Texas and one of only 23 in the United States.

According to the US Travel Association, \$947 billion was generated by domestic and international travelers in 2015, placing tourism as one of our nation's largest economic generators and spurring an additional \$1.2 trillion in other industries.

Travel is also an important industry in Texas. In 2015, total direct travel spending in Texas was over \$68.7 billion which directly supported 647,900 jobs and generated \$6.2 billion in state and local taxes. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the Texas travel industry was \$33.5 billion in 2015.

For San Antonio, the impact is anticipated to be significant, as tourism is one of the city's top five industries, providing 1 in 8 jobs and more than \$13.6 billion annually. And if leveraged properly, World Heritage status will be a catalyst for socio-economic change.

Lessons learned during planning, implementation, and analysis of the program:

The collaborative community-wide process to achieve inscription wouldn't have been possible without the cooperative work and investments of so many partners. It was also the realization that this designation would not have been achieved without the \$246 million collaborative investment in river improvements, the waterway that connects all five missions, which includes \$176 million from Bexar County, \$6.5 million from the City, \$51.9 million from the Army Corps of Engineers and the \$4.7 million from private donors through the San Antonio River Art Foundation.

How the program has raised awareness of the contributions of Local Government Managers

It was through a collaborative community inclusive process that our community achieved World Heritage status for the San Antonio Missions, and it will be a continued coordinated effort among all the initial partners and more to maximize the benefits of the designation.

To this end, the City of San Antonio has established a World Heritage Office to prepare for increased tourism activity and to maximize the benefits, by using input from the community to develop a World Heritage Work Plan. The work plan identifies specific tasks and deliverables, which include: management and oversight, infrastructure, wayfinding, transportation, beautification, economic development, land use, and marketing and outreach. The work plan is a dynamic document, led by the City department, and items may be added to the work plan as a result of additional public input.