

# A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

2020 and 2021 have been turbulent and life-changing to say the least. Like many of you, we have had to adapt in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic crisis. When the pandemic first took hold, we amended our operations and staff protocols in order to ensure the health and safety of our personnel as well as the entire Downtown district. Downtown has never been cleaner or safer.

Then, the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25th, 2020 sparked nationwide protests calling for social justice and equity reforms. We were proud to stand with our community in peaceful protest, including funding the street mural surrounding Travis Park inspired by Vocab Sanderson, our poet laureate. We looked inward at our makeup and began redesigning our organization to more accurately reflect the community we serve. The calls for social justice manifested in all aspects of our events and programming, raising the voices of local BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people.

In Spring of 2020, we launched our new Main Street Business program to preserve and empower local businesses downtown in the face of unprecedented economic hardship. We have connected with over 3,000 businesses and helped hundreds get connected to resources from PPE to loans.

During the 2020 holiday season, we partnered with Hemisfair for the wildly successful drive through experience and had our biggest media win with our month-long surprise snow flurries around downtown.

Throughout these past 2 years, we have continued to be a leader in homeless assistance. As a highlight, just prior to the deep freeze, we got 65 people into shelter and safety. That's at least 12x more than normal.

In 2021, we expanded our winning programs such as

Art Everywhere: 19 new murals up around downtown all by local artists

Landscaping: deployed all beautiful, new, professionally designed planting program and layout

Main Street: Provide \$440K in small business grants funded by Midtown and Houston St TIRZ

Marketing Downtown: From \$500K to over \$4MM in earned media from 2019 to 2021, we are significantly expanding our reach in promoting all things great about living, playing and working downtown

And launched a few more such as

2022 Bond Advocacy: We pulled together 25 amazing individuals led by tri-chairs Pete Cortez, Rene Garcia and Veronica Mendez who led a thorough process to identify, prioritize and advocate for critical, high-impact projects for the 2022 Bond as well as various TIRZ funding. To date, TIRZ boards have approved all requests.

Peacock Alley: New urban place-making location that was a major community, small business and media hit that is now being activated all year long under our management

Alliance Membership: We have restarted our Alliance Membership which can be seen here: https://centrosanantonio.org/membership/. Our first Membership event, In The Mix, exceeded our expectations of 125 participants to over 300. A great start to rebuilding our Membership.

In the report below, you will see our impact described and measured. There is no way, however, to properly measure the outpouring of support and collaboration we have enjoyed from the community. Thank you for encouraging us to do the work that we do!

Matt Brown, CEO



#### **WHY WE EXIST**

To create a beautiful, welcoming, playful, and prosperous downtown in the spirit of San Antonio.

### **OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

We seek to think big, have fun, get the right stuff done, and be good to others. Living by our principles below helps us achieve this.

Community: Devoted to Serving, Reflecting, and Building a Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Community.

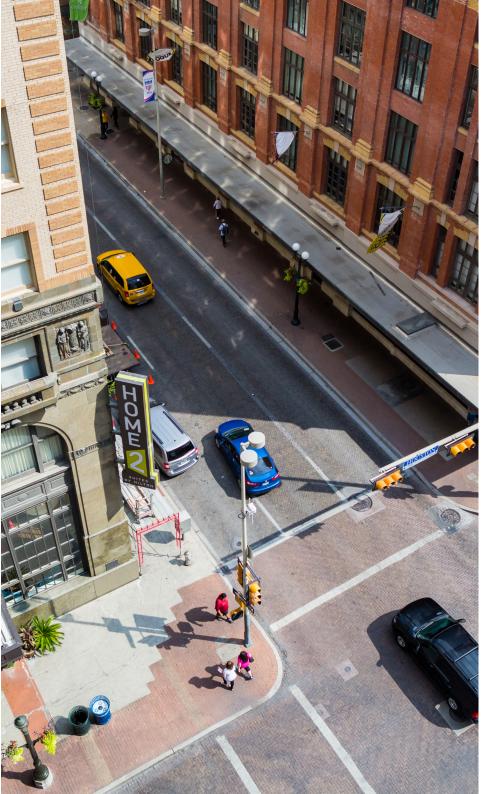
Courage: Demonstrate Passion, Bravery, and Commitment to Do the Right Thing. Be Vulnerable and Learn from Our Missteps.

 ${\it Creativity: Be\ Curious.\ Be\ Outrageously\ Imaginative\ Problem-solvers\ and\ PlayMakers.}$ 

Empathy: Listen with an Open Heart. Treat Everyone with Care, Kindness, and Respect.

Dedication: Be Pragmatic, Tenacious, and Intentional in Our Work and Effort.

Join us as we work every day to help cultivate a complete, well-functioning ecosystem of neighborhoods and thriving enterprises situated in the civic and cultural epicenter of our beautiful, historic city.



# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- Make Downtown More Welcoming
  - Clean & Safe Services, including Homeless Assistance & Hospitality
- Make Downtown More Beautiful & Playful
  - Physical Enhancements: Art Everywhere, Landscaping, & Shade the Sidewalks
  - Urban Activation and Play
- Share Passion & Care for Downtown
  - Marketing
  - Advocacy: 2022 Bond, Broadway, & Zona
- Prosperity
  - Governance
  - Main Street Business Support Program
  - Membership in Alliance
  - Grant Administration





# 2020 2021





#### **FAST FACTS**

Centro uses an environmentally friendly disinfectant that kills all viruses, including the Coronavirus. In 2020, we disinfected infrastructure 6,842,911 times.

## **FAST FACTS**

Centro hires a team to use non-lethal methods to remove birds out of the PID. That means less bird poop on the sidewalks.



Centro Ambassadors maintained and increased cleaning and implemented new disinfecting protocols in 2020 to support property owners and businesses during the pandemic. We increased powerwashing potency with virus-killing bleach tablets to clean sidewalks and continued our bird abatement program. Our team achieved existing PID, River Walk, VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA), and San Antonio River Authority (SARA) contract requirements for service and delivery to ensure a cleaner, safer, friendlier, more vibrant, and active environment. Rigorous disinfecting measures are the new standard to help slow the spread of Coronavirus. With less congestion in 2020, our crew took advantage of the opportunity to sanitize our downtown sidewalks. We are ready to welcome back the community to an even cleaner and more beautiful downtown.



11,475

**GRAFFITI** 

**REMOVED** 

4,006



# **FAST FACTS**

Since 2010 we've hired 175 applicants from Haven for Hope's workforce development program.

That's 40% of our Ambassador team!







# HOSPITALITY

Between March and June 2020, Centro shifted attention from hospitality to cleanliness, focusing on disinfecting the PID in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. There have been fewer tourists and visitors to Downtown and as a result our Ambassadors have had fewer interactions than years past. Centro Ambassadors, in partnership with Metro Health, distributed thousands of masks to downtown visitors during the Christmas and New Year's holidays to slow the spread of COVID-19.

#### **DOWNTOWN PUBLIC RESTROOM**

There are 12 public restrooms located in the downtown area. You will find public restrooms at Main Plaza, St. Mary's Parking Garage, Centro Info Center, La Villita, Market Square, Rivercenter Mall, the Loo at Alamo and Commerce St., the Central Library, VIA information Center, the Convention Center, the Go Rio Market Street Ticket Booth, and the Visitor Center at Alamo Plaza. As of now, only one of those locations is open 24/7. By March of 2022, Centro will add a new 24/7 public restroom. The new Loo, which will be funded by the PID and located at the northeast corner of Navarro and Crockett St, was approved by City Council on August 5th.

# HOW DID OUR HOMELESS ASSISTANCE EFFORTS RESPOND TO COVID-19?

Between March and June 2020. Centro shifted attention from hospitality to cleanliness, focusing on disinfecting the PID in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. We forged strategic partnerships with the City of San Antonio Department of Human Services (DHS), South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless, and other homeless service providers to meet clients' most urgent needs. Outreach staff worked at DHS' FEMA shelter for the medically vulnerable. Outreach staff conducted daily point-in-time counts, and Centro shared data with the City & partners. Outreach staff also assisted at the Homeless Resource Hub located at Christian Assistance Ministries. providing ID Recovery support throughout May and June 2020. From March through December 2020, outreach staff distributed more than 15.000 meals to the homeless in partnership with Corazon Ministries and DHS. Centro funded a temporary position for Corazon Ministries to increase meal preparation. Centro Ambassadors distributed food and administered temperature checks at the City of San Antonio Homeless Resource Hub and the San Fernando Gymnasium from April 2020 to July 2020.











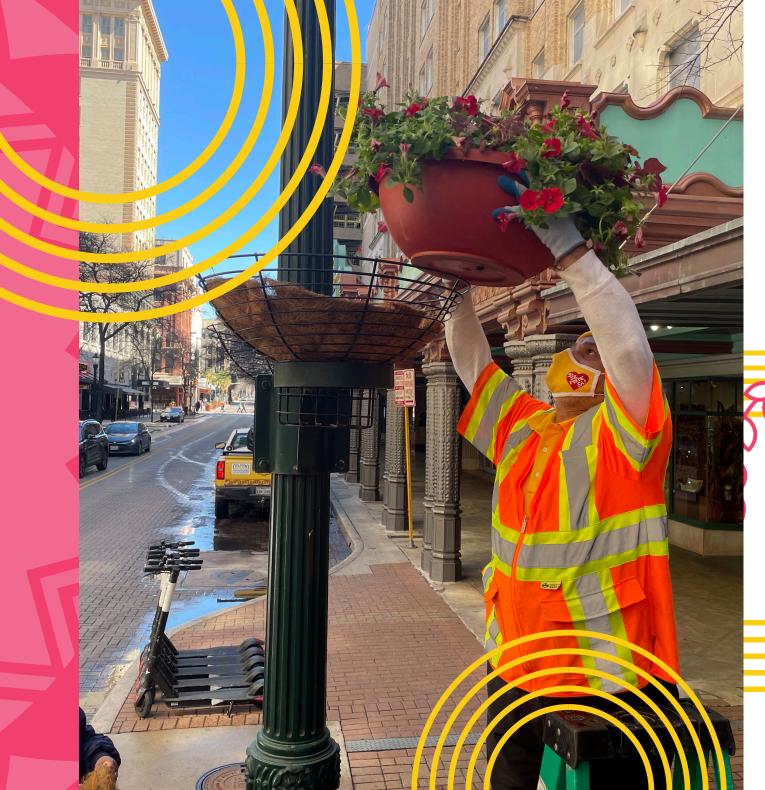


### **ART EVERYWHERE**

Centro has become a conduit for art and the urban core, bringing together stakeholders and art, streamlining formal processes, and discovering art grants and sponsorships to fund art, which is our goal for the program. We make art happen.

Phase one of Art Everywhere finished 2020 by completing ten art projects, with diverse representation and community collaboration, adding to Downtown's de facto reputation as the epicenter of culture, coolness, and community. Phase Two ("21 in 21") will feature 21 new art projects completed Downtown by accelerating the timeline and art density.





### **LANDSCAPING**

Centro installs and maintains landscaping and planters in the District to support property owners and businesses. We do this by supplementing existing City of San Antonio services to ensure a more beautiful, friendlier, and vibrant overall environment. We are implementing a strategic plan for plant design and pot placement. The design will incorporate species that will minimize maintenance, provide shade, habitat, and additional cultural value, including native trees, fruiting trees, and perennial flowering plants.



# **SHADE EQUITY**

Shade is a civic resource that should be shared by all. In late 2020, the 'Shade Equity' competition challenged Texas architects to identify an artistic and practical concept for a "Shade Structure" that can be duplicated and implemented across downtown. Funded by a \$500,000 grant from the City of San Antonio, Centro will install two sets of shade structures and conduct a shade study, to better understand shade need and opportunity for San Antonio's urban core future. Centro will begin installation of shade structures by Fall '21 and will roll out all shade structures completely by the end of 2023.









**PEACOCK ALLEY** 

8,000 ATTENDEES

127,000 SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

\$28,000 FOR LOCAL ARTISTS \$161,000 IN EARNED MEDIA

\$70,000 IN EARNED MEDIA 57,000 SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

# **EVENTS, PROGRAMMING & PLAY ACTIVATIONS**

In 2020, our programming went virtual with "Facebook Friday" with Matt Brown, CEO, answering the community's questions on Downtown's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. And we hosted a "Rise Together" Pride Panel- Zoom webinar during which local Black and LGBTQ+ community members discussed how we could create a more welcoming downtown. We had over 1000 viewers of our virtual programming and tons of engagement from the audience. In continued support of small businesses, the production team partnered with Sip coffee and tested a homebrew experience and tutorial socially distanced activity for locals to try at home. Following CDC guidelines, we hosted our first outdoor dining pilot in October at the La Boulangerie/Travis lot with the "Keep Calm Et Macaron" mural by Kathy Sosa as a backdrop. Based on feedback from this first activation, we activated a more extensive execution at the Jefferson Parking Lot and Peacock Alley. In June, we were able to bring back our in-person Family Pride Night at Madison Square Park, which created a brave space for LGBTQ+ families and youth.

#### THE 2ND ANNUAL FAMILY PRIDE NIGHT AT MADISON SQUARE PARK



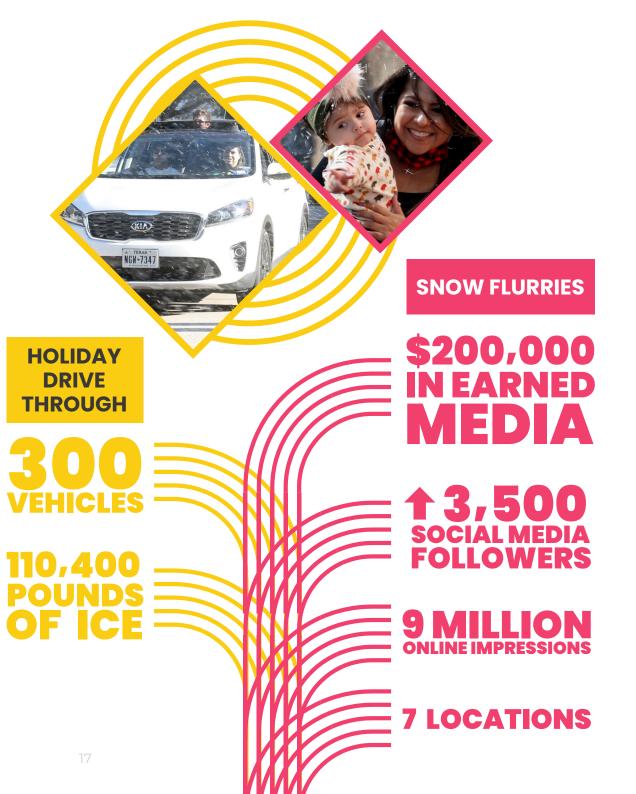
## **FAST FACTS**

Centro is now part of a working group developing a SATX community Farmer's Market toolkit. The goal is to pilot test a farmer's market with a late Spring/early summer tool, likely in Zona Cultural.



# WINTER WONDERLAND

Far from a typical Holiday Season, we worked to spark joy and merriment all winter long through curated experiences which incorporated recommended public health practices. The faux snow activations, which began on Small Business Saturday (November 28th, 2020) filled the air and covered the pavement with the miraculous sight of snow (a then rare occurrence for Texans). The community, stakeholders, and media flooded us with positive responses. The culmination came with a partnership with Hemisfair and a complete Holiday Drive-Thru experience, which quickly exceeded capacity.

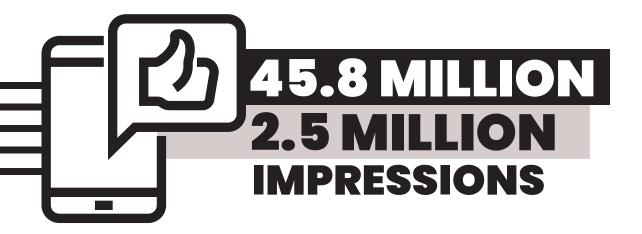


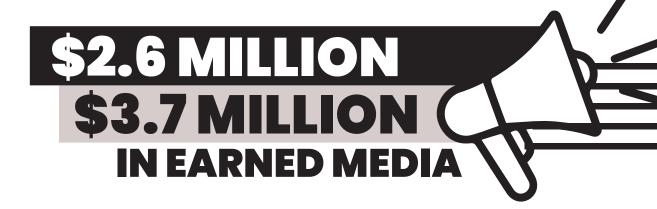


2020 202

# **CENTRO IN THE MEDIA**

In 2020, Centro San Antonio surpassed 50,000 followers on social media platforms and generated 45.8 million impressions. Through these platforms, we have garnered 45.8 million impressions. In addition to marketing our services, the downtown neighborhood, and our new initiatives, we communicated vital information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and creating new campaigns that encouraged recommend health practices and supported local businesses and communities through positive messaging. Our stories included personal stories about the Ambassadors, the joy and inspiration of new art, our advocacy of small businesses and people experiencing homelessness, the resilience and passions of our community, and new disinfecting equipment with a ghostbusters vibe! It is awesome.











At the end of May 2020, protests broke out nationwide against police brutality and support of Black Lives Matter after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Our community marched in solidarity for many of the following days and weeks. Our organization stood alongside the peaceful demonstrations, offering a welcome hand or cold paleta to ease the Summer heat. Through the passion of local activists, including Antonio Lee, we were able to collaborate with San Antonio Poet Laureate and activist Andrea "Vocab" Sanderson to produce the massive street mural entitled "Elevated Melanin." The poem covered the streets surrounding Travis Park.

While most protests in San Antonio were relatively peaceful, some businesses downtown sustained damages. The Main Street team jumped into action with the Repair and Protect Grant Program to offset costs small businesses incurred to either board up to protect their businesses or repair damaged storefronts. Through this program, our team distributed \$26,826 in grants to 13 businesses. Our May press conference led to local and national media attention, including national FOX News! Despite things getting heavy and divisive in the media, we have generated great coverage based on positive, heartfelt, constructive stories.



# SI SE PUEDE SA

Spearheaded by our Vice-President of Urban Planning, our "Si Se Puede SA" campaign started as pop-up art pieces adorning downtown trees, businesses, and landmarks. It quickly grew into a community-generated movement with homemade hearts, billboards, news stories, and more.



\$56,000 IN EARNED MEDIA

# 1.6 MILLION ONLINE IMPRESSIONS

# \$51,000 IN EARNED MEDIA

# **CUÍDENSE SA**

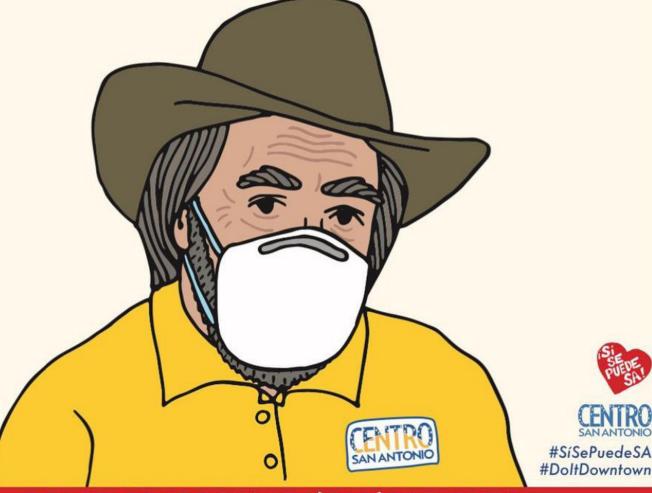
Coming off the heels of our Si Se Puede SA campaign, we pivoted our messaging to encourage adherence to recommend health practices while also delivering unexpected moments of wonder in the downtown neighborhood. The Cuidense SA campaign utilized the stylings of local artist Isabel Ann Castro to spread awareness of social distancing, wearing a face mask, and washing hands while creating memorable, shareable, and "puro" memes. We arranged for a pop-up activation in partnership with local artist Ana Fernandez to distribute complimentary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and paletas from her iconic Chamoy City Limits truck. The mobile experience enhanced social distancing, showcased the artwork of Isabel Ann Castro, provided needed resources to the community, and created unforgettable moments for those spending time Downtown for whatever reason



Protect Yourself And Our Community From Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Protéjase a Usted Y a Nuestra Comunidad Del Coronavirus (COVID-19)

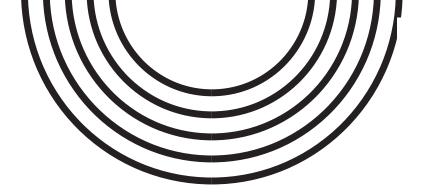


# HEY BABY QUE PASO, WHERE'S YA MASK?



COVID-19 HOTLINE: (210)207-5779

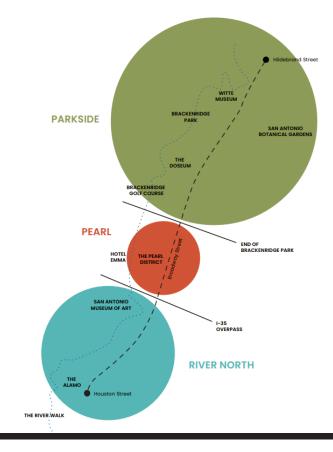






# BROADWAY CULTURAL CORRIDOR

Championed by Centro back in 2017, the \$42 million dollar bond project was designed to transform the urban core stretch of Broadway Street from a car-centric commercial corridor into a multimodal, complete street. This ambitious plan, paid for by Centro, was developed with business and community stakeholders who voiced support for reduced vehicle lanes, buried utilities, wide sidewalks, bike lanes and connectivity, unified wayfinding, and lots of trees. Now nearing completion, Centro assists in seeing this project to the finish line, working with public and private stakeholders to deliver this transformation and ensure the construction of the voter-approved design. We published a resolution encouraging the development of a comprehensive micro-mobility plan. In 2021, a branding process for the Broadway Corridor was launched and a place brand was completed in the Summer. Progress on the lower and upper Broadway Corridor continues, with an area of primary focus being the Avenue B Bike Lanes, which is nearing consensus on design. The CoSA Public Works team continues to meet with stakeholders as infrastructure work continues south, relaying info and addressing concerns.



# **ZONA CULTURAL**

Zona Cultural celebrates the story of San Antonio through music, food, culture, and the arts. A state-designated cultural district, Zona is home to many of the city's most historic and iconic institutions – and is today poised for extraordinary transformation. With significant new public and private investment in the district, Centro recently unveiled the 'Zona Cultural Design Guidelines.' The result of a long-term stakeholder visioning process, these guidelines will infuse the district's unique character into the public built environment, offer private investment direction, and provide cohesion and a high-quality design aesthetic echoing Zona's distinctive cultural context.







# **CENTRO ALLIANCE**

On February 11th, 2020, Jordan Foster gave 20 Centro members an exclusive hard hat tour of the new The Arts Residence at the Thompson Hotel. Members got a bird's eye view of 20 new developments Downtown. We temporarily suspended our Centro Alliance membership program throughout the pandemic. Our weekly newsletter is accessible by all subscribers, and the minimal amount of in-person programming was free. We have rebuilt the membership program with new levels. Additionally, we will have new opportunities for the community to plug in with Centro via working committees and a new Chairs' Council. We're excited to welcome Laura Aldrich to the team as our new Membership and Story Catalyst! Laura brings a strong background in sales, marketing, events, visual communication, and project management to the Centro team. Laura is finalizing the offerings of the future membership program and working to re-imagine benefits, streamline lead-generating resources and fine-tune practices around engagement at every level. We are excited to unveil new membership materials and benefit structures developed around a shared passion for participating in a thriving urban ecosystem & shaping the future of San Antonio. We are preparing to debut the new membership program, along with an updated membership webpage & catalog. Keep an eye out for our fresh and exciting take on membership-based events starting with the debut of our new series 'In the Mix' projected for kick-off in November 2021!

# **GOVERNANCE**

We have added five new Committees to help us engage with our awesome community to make downtown SATX more beautiful, prosperous, playful and welcoming.

Chair's Council: Creative, strategic, and well-connected influencers who ideate on vision and strategy, helping us align to community priorities, and knock down barriers to achieving our mission.

Economic Development Committee: Evolve and nurture main street businesses by participating in strategy development, execution, and advocacy.

Urban Planning & Design Committee: Volunteer professionals with subject matter expertise helping shepherd the realization of downtown projects that support the development of a well-functioning city for all by bringing great new structures, spaces and places downtown.

The Resident's Voice Committee: A cool group of locals who represent the diversity of greater downtown area keep us connected to their needs and desires, help guide our work, advocate for downtown and have fun at Centro events!

Membership Committee: This working group helps the Centro Alliance recruit paying members, secure sponsorships for our various initiatives, and raise funds for our advocacy work.





## **OUTREACH, RECOVERY, AND RESILIENCY**

As part of COSA's Covid-19 Community Recovery and Resiliency Plan, Centro was awarded \$225,000 to conduct outreach to businesses in and around downtown and connect them to meaningful resources. Centro hired Sarah Esserlieu as our Economic Development Director, Linda Stone as our Senior Main Street Navigator, and four temporary Main Street Navigators to see the grant through to completion over four months. Through this effort, we connected 965 local businesses to vital resources and established a permanent Main Street Business Support Program that meets businesses where they're at and supports the small, minority, and women-owned businesses ecosystem downtown. Centro also distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) to 345 businesses to ensure the businesses can open responsibly prioritizing employee and customer safety.

## **GRANT ADMINISTRATION**

We have developed and implemented our grant-writing system. We officially secured two grants, one for \$369,000 for the Homeless Outreach program and one in collaboration with the San Antonio Board of Realtors for \$4,500 for a proposed activation of Peacock Alley!

In April 2021, the City of San Antonio approved Centro to administer \$500,000 in grants up to \$25,000 for businesses affected by construction along the Broadway corridor, Alamo Plaza, and surrounding streets.

## THE LAST WORD

After an incredible year in which our organization thrived in the face of numerous large-scale challenges, we look to the future with confidence and optimism. In the next fiscal year, we plan to build upon our successes this past year. And in 5 years downtown, aka El Centro, is full of art, events, spaces and places that make San Antonians excited about and proud of their downtown. We move forward from 2021 affirmed in the belief that together with our community we can create a more beautiful, playful, prosperous and welcoming El Centro ... the heartbeat of San Antonio.

## **FAST FACTS**

The Main Street Team had the opportunity to support a local startup, PureAware, in their "Breathe Puro, San Antonio" campaign to provide free air purifiers to small businesses downtown. In addition to connecting over 50 small companies, this promotion gained Centro visibility in 132 publications nationwide and \$1.92 million in earned media.

#### **FAST FACTS**

Last year, we distributed nearly \$27,000 in storefront repair-and-protect grants to 13 businesses that sustained damages following protests in May 2020.

# CENTRO SAN ANTONIO

**CENTROSA.ORG**