

Casita Project

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The Casita Project: A Social Contract Between UTSA and the Westside

Every relationship begins as a social contract. Whether as a friendship or a working dynamic, a social contract sets the foundation for underlying value systems and how a relationship will thrive and grow. The relationship between the University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA) and the vulnerable Westside community is of utmost importance to the university, community, and San Antonio, as the city is experiencing rapid urban growth and transformation. As UTSA is expanding its downtown campus, the university is aware of its impact and responsibility in lending a helping hand as a partner, neighbor, and friend. We as a community also have to respond to the challenges that come with progress, growth, and change, impacting the communities.

Studies by the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders (NALCAB)—a national network of nearly 150 nonprofit organizations serving diverse Latino communities in more than 40 states—and Prosper West—a nonprofit community economic development organization that has formed a coalition of community members and partners to make San Antonio’s Westside a more prosperous place for families and businesses—assert that a deeper commitment on the Westside is fundamental, supporting the community in this critical moment of transformation.

As a Next-Gen Faculty Leadership Fellow, Dr. Antonio Petrov and UFL interns Kelsey Brown, Nicole

Chavez, Karla Ruiz, and Luis Escalante are undertaking a research initiative, working with UTSA Vice President for University Relations, Teresa Niño, to propose a strategic plan that outlines possible future relations between UTSA and the Westside. In the form of a social contract, the idea is to formulate a path that builds on shared values, setting the foundation for a prosperous future in which the university and the community together activate the environment in a reciprocal and culturally sustainable relationship. Following NALCAB and Prosper West recommendations, we believe this relationship can manifest by investing in new ideas that incentivize local economic development and incremental community revitalization, fostering an affordable housing strategy that can be made accessible to everyone on the Westside and incoming UTSA students seeking housing as part of the university’s downtown expansion.

While the recommendations unearth opportunities for economic growth, they also outline challenges like rising residential property taxes, increasing population and gentrification due to a growing student body, and the loss of cultural identity because of the negative impacts global market-economies have on communities such as the Westside. The Urban Future Lab’s proposal finds inspiration in the existing condition, turning what appears to be conflicting interests into a living document that

catalyzes new opportunities by activating the synergies between UTSA, the Westside, and the city. The goal is to turn the increasing demand for student housing into an activator for the Westside rather than eliciting existential socio-economic conflicts. While the Westside’s priority is to maintain affordability and identity in its neighborhoods, values UTSA shares, the university operates on the scale of student success, educational excellence, progressive growth, and innovation. Our proposal sees a window of opportunity, considering both local particularities and the outlook of a R1 research university, fusing them into the “Casita” project. Casitas, or accessory dwelling units (ADUs), are idiosyncratic for San Antonio’s housing landscape, supporting families with residual income across the city. Accordingly, the primary goal of the strategic plan is to not only help homeowners in economically taxing times but establish ties between a community, students, and a university, investing in a long-term economic development strategy, highlighting the future can be affordable, attainable, and safe, with new resources that help maintain community ownership, neighborhood character, and cultural integrity, as part of a new social contract.

Within this context we propose 5 topics that:

1. imagine integrated community housing on the Westside for downtown campus students under the umbrella of a tenant program.
2. utilize UTSA resources to educate the community when it comes to questions about taxing, rapid appreciation, inflation, community trust, and city

resources, like the owner-occupied rehabilitation and reconstruction program, the proposed spending plan for affordable housing by the City of San Antonio’s 2022-2027 Bond program, and TIRZ funding.

3. assist in identifying microfinancing sources to activate local opportunities on an individual scale to participate in the Casita project, providing the possibility to those who have no access to regular loans.
4. stimulate the existing makers economy on the Westside by keeping the making of Casitas a part of local economic cycles.
5. advocate for code and zoning adjustments to provide equitable, inclusive, and just environments that allow residents to take ownership of their own economic opportunities amid rising housing costs and property taxes.

Introduction

Five Topics

The Casita Project focuses on incremental infill through housing repairs, additions, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to maintain community ownership and neighborhood character. ADUs can create rental opportunities through a values-based **UTSA Tenant Program** that forms a commitment between UTSA and the Westside for an incremental, flexible, and affordable solution to housing a growing student population. It builds connections between the university and the community and creates long-term economic investment in the Westside.

Regarding **tax alleviation and city resources**, UTSA can support the Westside community by being their advocate, informing and educating residents about current policies and upcoming policy change(s). By assisting with **microfinancing**, UTSA connects the right partners and sets the foundation for microscale economic development processes to unfold. Knowledge, services, materials, and labor can be exchanged between the university and the community in a reciprocal relationship that activates the Westside's **makers economy**. The approach is sustainable for residents, who are given an opportunity to bring existing homes up to code and make Casitas through community collaboration. At stake is the cultural

integrity of the Westside, but also the community's ability to maintain their residency and retain the history and character of the Westside neighborhood. As San Antonio's population increases, so do housing costs and property taxes throughout all communities. To counteract this, **we advocate for code and zoning policy changes** to help transform the zone of single-family housing into one of incremental density, community ownership, and residual income to keep up with rising costs of living.

How do we mitigate the impact of UTSA expansion on the Westside and be a good neighbor?

- Anticipated impact of UTSA expansion
 - Challenges:
 - › Increased property taxes
 - › Increased population due to new student body
 - › Socio-economic challenges
 - › Gentrification and loss of cultural integrity
 - › Opportunities
 - › Collaboration, engagement, outreach
 - › Exchange of skills, knowledge, services
- Being a good neighbor means a value-based system focused on reciprocity and sustainability.
 - Strategic partnerships create a more sustainable alternative to standard administrative approaches.
 - We are activators (not representatives) balancing the territories of global housing

and economic factors within the local economy and neighborhood needs

How does the mission, vision, and core values of UFL provide the foundation upon which this strategic plan is developed?

- UTSA's Westside Community Center (WCC) has existed in the community for a few years, and we plan to work in collaboration with existing efforts of the WCC. This creates an opportunity for the WCC to be utilized as a hub/nexus between the Westside and UTSA, where open dialogue and communication can happen with the community.
- UFL identifies the tenants and partnerships necessary for this program and engages the community in finalizing its development through active input, inclusion and transparency throughout the process. We seek to build relationships and establish roots in the communities we work with so that projects can unfold according to common interests.

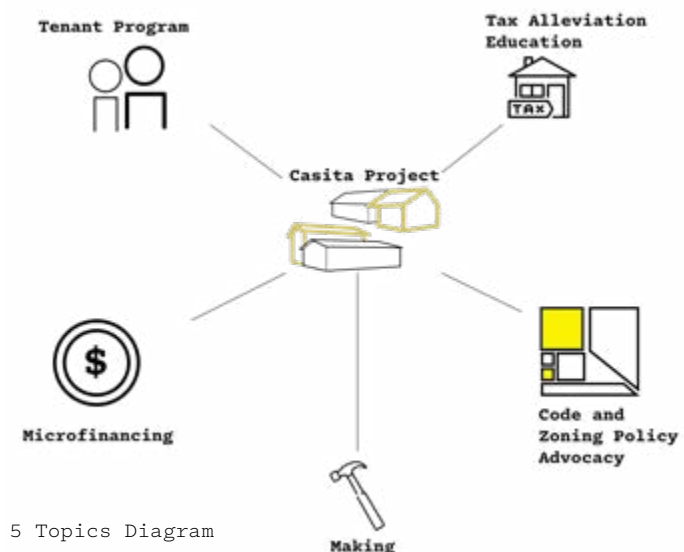


Figure 1: 5 Topics Diagram

How did we arrive at this concept?

- Housing is at the center of the narratives based on the NALCAB assessment on the Westside. They identified three main risks:
 - Risks for renters associated with increased housing costs.
 - Risks for renters associated with the redevelopment of subsidized housing.
 - Risks for low-income homeowners, including increased property taxes.
- In addition to the risks identified by NALCAB, UTSA also considers the future risk for new members of this community who want to move in and be part of it.
- NALCAB also provided four key recommendations for the Westside based on these risks:
 - Manage factors that drive housing costs.
 - Preserve existing affordable housing stock.
 - Implement consumer protection/fraud prevention efforts.
 - Boost incomes of existing neighborhood residents.
- Housing (along with health and education) is a top priority looking to the future of San Antonio as well
- This approach focuses on
 - Incremental development
 - Preserving cultural identity/integrity
 - Community ownership
 - Financial accessibility and financial benefit

- Reciprocity
- Sustainability
- Successful Communications
- Transformation
- UTSA can play a critical role in helping the community shape the future of development in their neighborhood
 - By providing a framework for incremental growth
 - By forming reciprocity through real-world projects that integrate the Westside community's needs into UTSA's curriculum – students benefit from hands-on experience that provides for the community
- We've identified five topics with potential for significant impact for both UTSA and the community
 1. Tenant Program
 2. Tax Alleviation Education
 3. Microfinancing
 4. Making
 5. Code and Zoning Policy Advocacy



5 Topics



1. Tenant Program

Summary: A Good Neighbor Contract that provides integrated community housing for downtown campus students. The is significant in its symbolic nature and as an official agreement between the two entities. This value-based contract forms a commitment in being good neighbors to each other, provides more affordable student housing, and also provides for the long-term financial sustainability of these ADUs through financial investment in the Westside. This Good Neighbor Contract also creates a commitment between both parties that goes beyond the financial to strengthen reciprocal social and cultural ties between UTSA and our neighbors on the Westside. As both of these communities grow, this program aids in the cultural sustainability of the Westside through its incremental growth and cultural exchange between both groups.

Possible Purpose

- This program creates long-term economic investment in the Westside to sustain Casitas with residual income guaranteed through the need for student rentals.
- This also builds connections between UTSA's student body and the Westside community to be good neighbors to each other.

Possible Partners

- UTSA
 - [Residence Life Program](#)
 - › Collaborate with Westside Partner on terms of Good Neighbor Contract
 - › Create digital infrastructure for landlord/tenant applications and rental listings
 - UTSA Real Estate
 - › Ensure legal aspects of the program are met
- UTSA Alvarez College of Business Tenant Partners
 - [Real Estate Founders Council](#)
 - › Ensure legal aspects of the program are met
 - [International Facilities Management Association](#)
 - › Advise new landlords on responsibilities/expectations
- Westside Tenant Partners
 - [SAAHC](#)
 - › Provide ongoing support to Westside landlords
 - [C.O.P.S.](#)
 - › Collaborate with UTSA on terms of Good Neighbor Contract
 - [Tier 1 Neighborhood Coalition](#)
 - › Collaborate with UTSA on terms of Good Neighbor Contract
- Westside Cultural Exchange Partners
 - [Esperanza Peace & Justice Center - MujerArtes Clay Cooperative](#)
 - › Provide opportunities for student engagement in Westside as part of their Good Neighbor Contract
 - [WCC](#)
 - › Provide opportunities for student engagement in

- › Westside as part of their Good Neighbor Contract
- › Could run an app for rental listings, applications, ongoing support, etc.

Possible Strategies

- The Good Neighbor Contract forms a commitment between UTSA students and Westside residents.

How do residents get involved?

- Interested residents can apply to list their rental through UTSA's website
- Owners will agree to the Good Neighbor Contract, which lists responsibilities and expectations of the program
- Approved Casitas will be listed through UTSA's Residence Life webpage.
- Owners agree to list their property for X amount of years and can renew by following this process again.

How do students get involved?

- Interested students must also agree to Good Neighbor Contract (could be done through online modules, see [UWM's Preferred Tenant Program](#) as a precedent), which also sets responsibilities and expectations of them as tenants.
- Once completed, students will be able to view rental options from UTSA website and apply for ones they may be interested in.
- Good Neighbor Contract may require community engagement aspects to get involved in Westside efforts and more fully immerse themselves in the community

What is UTSA's responsibility?

- UTSA will need to conduct property checks to ensure safety and other requirements are met.
- UTSA will need to work with community partners to determine the terms and conditions of the Good Neighbor Contract.
 - See [UWM's Good Neighbor Program as a precedent](#)
- UTSA will need to build out website functionings for resident applications, Good Neighbor Contract learning modules, and rental listings.

Possible Benefits

For the Westside

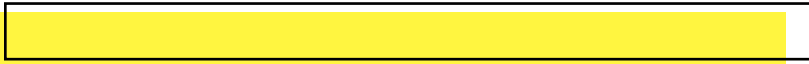
- Financial investment (money directly to residents & Westside economy)
- Exposure to 1st Gen higher education
- Incremental infill preserves cultural integrity and neighborhood character
- Maintains community ownership while managing growth

For UTSA

- Students gain independent, affordable living near campus
- No maintenance on the university's part
- Opportunity to be a leader in social development - set a precedent
- Incremental infill is more financially feasible than mass dorm construction

For Both

- Reciprocity manifests in cultural exchange as students get involved in the Westside community
- Greater connection between the university and the neighboring community



Possible Stakeholders (who is impacted by the outcome of the project?)

- UTSA Real Estate
- Westside landlords
- Student tenants

Tenant Program Summary for the Westside:

The Good Neighbor Contract creates a process for UTSA students to rent Casitas for the long-term financial sustainability of these ADUs through financial investment in the Westside. Interested landlords can access the program through UTSA’s Residence Life Program to list their property and complete the Good Neighbor Contract agreement. This contract creates a commitment between UTSA and the Westside community to be equal partners and strengthen our reciprocal social and cultural ties as both of our communities grow.



DETACHED BACK EXTENSION

2. Tax Alleviation Education and City Resources

Summary: UTSA is committed to providing resources to educate the community when it comes to questions about taxing, rapid appreciation, inflation, community trust, and city resources, like the Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, Minor Repair, and Under 1 Roof programs; the proposed spending plan for affordable housing by the City of San Antonio’s 2022-2027 Bond program; and TIRZ funding. These programs and funding sources are discussed in further detail in this strategic plan’s “Opportunities” section. Currently, UTSA’s Westside Community Center (WCC) helps 78207 zip code residents with Property Tax Evaluations. UTSA can expand on these services by implementing other educational programs for the Westside community. Information would be available at the WCC, online, and passed out at events where WCC is involved or placed at local businesses. The educational programs could be created with the help of strategic partners such as LISC’s policy team, or San Antonio Alternative Housing, and possibly UTSA Law and Real Estate students. This strategy of education is sustainable and reciprocal. Educating residents on tax alleviation is sustainable as it’s done once a year by the WCC and residents can continue it on their own year after year; reciprocal in that students get to help out with educating the public, and residents who benefit from WCC education go on to tell others.

Possible Purpose

- Tax Alleviation is meant to relieve residents from too rapid transformation.
- Under this strategic plan, Tax Alleviation is about educating residents of available exemptions that they can capitalize on.
- Through this education, residents and partners will activate individuals and the community to manage the rapid transformation, in such a way that the residents want to manage it for themselves.
- Local scale is about managing rapid transformation at a pace that residents can handle and navigate.
- Global scale is advocating for, and supporting educational services in any and all policy changes in the city.

Possible Strategy

Capitalizing on UTSA being an educational institution, education will be the number one strategy of informing westside residents of tax alleviation available to them.

- The education component can take the form of printed materials, classes, and videos.
 - Printed materials: pamphlets/brochures, flyers of when classes are held.
 - Classes: property tax evaluations, upcoming legislature/voting events.
 - › 1-2 session classes for the public held just before the new tax season.
 - › Held at WCC or a partnering local library.
 - › In the case of limited mobility, partnering with the BiblioTech on the Westside could bridge the digital gap between virtual classes and Westsiders.
 - » Videos: Content is of available services to westside residents, partners bios & their involvement, and even videos on specific legislation or policies that residents can take advantage of.
 - » Would be made by UTSA students in English and Spanish, (or subtitled in English).
 - » Brief content videos less than 3 minutes.
 - » Collaboration videos with partners/residents/media

Possible Benefits to UTSA

Providing free resources to community residents about policies and how to apply them, instead of actively advocating for some specific policy, is another way that UTSA can still support the Westside. By utilizing its educational might, UTSA is doing a kind of civic duty by helping the westside community

Possible Benefits to partners

- Partners get to become advocates for the community
- Assist with managing gentrification
- Help residents and the westside community in ways that they need it.

Possible Partners

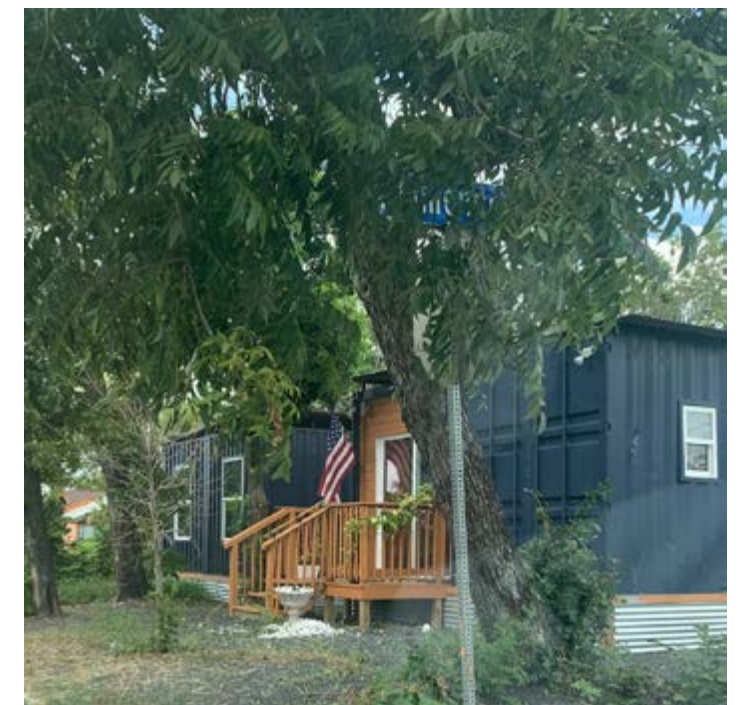
| Individual | Institutional |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Neighborhood Associations | UTSA's WCC |
| Bexar County BiblioTech Library | UTSA Institute for Law and Public Affairs |
| Bazan Library | City of SA's CITY COUNCIL PROJECT FUND (CCPF) |
| | Bexar County BiblioTech Library |
| | LISC Policy Team |

Identify possible stakeholders (who is impacted by the outcome of the project?)

- Internal
 - UTSA
 - › WCC + Institute of Economic Development
 - › Students + Faculty
 - Westside Residents
 - Strategic Partners
- External
 - Westside Community (or, San Antonio overall)
 - › Community Groups
 - Local Government / NGO
 - › San Antonio's Housing Authority
 - › SA Alternative Housing
 - Activists
 - Real Estate Flippers + Developers

Tax Alleviation Summary for the Westside:

The existing Westside Community Center operated by UTSA could play a role in supporting the our proposal to help educating Westside residents about tax alleviation. Current tax exemptions, legislation and policies are difficult to understand in and of themselves. So, by developing classes, videos, and succinct informational materials the WCC could inform and educate Westside residents about the topic. An informed community could manage the ongoing rapid transformation of the Westside, at a pace that residents can handle and navigate. By providing educational services to the Westside community, UTSA could become its biggest advocate, activating the community.





3. Microfinancing

Summary: UTSA could provide a path for Westsiders to create a sustainable partnership for microloans, by creating a webpage with all trusted partners for microfinancing, a contract-based service that gives access to financial services, so Westsiders can build their assets, bring their houses up to code and cushion themselves against external shocks.

Possible Purpose

- Provide grants, loans and equity for nearly every aspect of development, from planning and acquisition to construction and renovation for residents/homeowners on the Westside. (National Equity Fund, Inc.)
- Financing for creative placemaking projects through loans, grants and equity investments (The Kresge Foundation)
- Educate Westsiders on microloaning, financing and housing (UTSA's Westside Community Initiative & LISC)

Possible Strategy

- Strengthen existing alliances (UTSA's Westside Community Initiative, Avenida Guadalupe Association, UTSA Westside Scholarships, UTSA Real Estate) while building new collaborations to increase our impact on the progress of people and

places

- Contact UTSA's Westside Community Initiative to equip talent in underinvested communities with the skills and credentials to compete successfully for quality income and wealth opportunities
- Contact LISC and other partners to determine the terms of a sustainable partnership
- Provide a source of information for Westsiders to get in contact with the right partners.
 - Case 1 Construction: To pay hard and soft construction costs of new construction or renovation projects like a casita
 - Case 2 Working Capital: To provide flexible capital to meet organizational cash flow needs or pay project-based expenses like house renovations

Possible Benefits to Westside

- Homeowners will be able to apply for microfinancing, with a major possibility of getting accepted.
- The microloan could be used to fix their current property and make sure it is up to code.
- The microloan could be used to build a "casita" for personal use or to rent out.
- The microloan could be used for creative placemaking projects

Possible Benefits to UTSA

- Westside casitas can alleviate UTSA student housing increase with Downtown expansion
- Students from different Colleges can get experience and volunteer hours by getting involved in the community, designing, organizing, and educating.

Possible Partners

- UTSA
 - Westside Community Initiative
 - › Educating programs
 - Academic Planning & Policy
 - › Curriculum
 - UTSA Real Estate
 - › Student Housing
- [LISC](#)
 - [National Equity Fund, Inc.](#)
 - › Loans for Housing
 - [The Kresge Foundation](#)
 - › Loans for community
 - [My city my home](#)
 - › Provide Housing Education
- Credit Unions

Possible Stakeholders (who is impacted by the outcome of the project?)

- Westside homeowners
- Possible tenants
- Students

Microfinancing Summary for the Westside:

UTSA's path to support microfinancing initiative could provide the first steps in identifying resources and access to capital to the financially underserved on the Westside, such as those who are unable to get checking accounts, lines of credit, or loans from traditional banks.

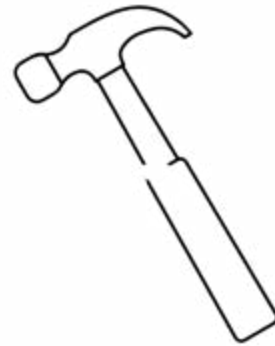


4. Making

Summary: Making on all scales is central to San Antonio's history. From manufacturers like Boeing and Toyota to individuals making jewelry, textiles, and crafts, San Antonio fosters connections between those who make, re-purpose, fix, remake, or reinvent. Many artists, activists, chefs, and musicians hail from the Westside, an organized community of makers who create a richness in family, art, historic spaces, culture, and tradition. Their desire to accelerate positive change while maintaining the vivid sights, sounds, and character of the historic neighborhood illustrates the importance of making to both the Westside and UTSA. The Casita Project builds upon the critical housing needs by tapping into individual skills and self-sufficiency of Westside residents to support them in making their own housing. Compared to large-scale new developer-based construction, the project focuses on a community-driven, incremental, and flexible approach to housing, providing alternative paths for making at social and cultural levels. The Westside's designation as a cultural arts district and the Zona Cultural capital improvements project could further help activate the area's existing makers' culture, bringing the project to life through making on the scale of the community and the individual.

Possible Purpose

- The Casita Project activates the Westside's organized community of makers, gives self-sufficiency, and fosters the area's sense of community.
 - Investment in and outlet for existing skills, boosted through knowledge exchange
 - Collaboration between makers contributes to a higher purpose
- Community making on the Westside taps into the area's richness in family, art, community, historic spaces, culture, and tradition
- Open source-plans, incremental growth, and do-



nated time, labor, and materials keep construction affordable and achievable

- Casitas (or ADUs) offer residents versatility, such as personal or family use, small business or workshop space, or rental units
- Possibility of a mobile UTSA fabrication lab on Westside

Possible Partners

Partnerships are foundational to the Urban Future Lab and the Casita Project uses strategic partner making to promote reciprocity and sustainability. Building on reciprocity, manifested in the sharing of knowledge, resources, and services between university, community, and partners, we hope to synergize existing forces in the Westside's makers economy. In our view, sustainability manifests by bringing existing homes up to code, keeping residents in their homes, and identifying underutilized areas to construct Casitas, creating a cycle that supports all layers of "the local".

- **What are our expectations from partners?**
 - Connect residents with physical/educational resources for projects
 - Transparency in all processes
 - Assist with connecting to materials supply and fabrication
- **Who has the resources, the will, and a collaborative spirit?**
 - Homeowners Workshops: build skills how to repair homes
 - › A possible mobile UTSA fabrication lab, already collaborating with the UFL on a Weston Urban project in Legacy Park.
 - › Rehabber Club
 - › CoSA Office of Historic Preservation

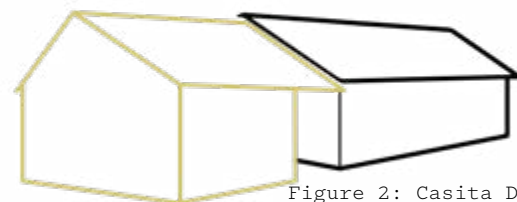


Figure 2: Casita Diagram

- Makerspace: co-working, learning, classes, mentors, equipment resource
 - 10BitWorks
 - › Laser cutting, engraving, woodworking, metalworking, 3D printing, electrical, CAD
- Housing Assistance: localized housing and support services for low- and moderate-income communities
 - San Antonio Alternative Housing
- Community Development: housing counseling and financial education programs
 - Avenida Guadalupe Association
- Workforce Development: tap into existing city and educational resources to augment practical skills alongside job training and boost incomes
 - SA Ready to Work Program (CoSA, SAC)
- Arts: maintaining vivid sights, sounds, character of historic neighborhood
 - El Guapo Fabrication and Design
 - Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center
- Education: sharing knowledge
 - Blue Star Contemporary Creative Classrooms
 - › share making knowledge and skills w/children
 - Southwest School of Art community classes
 - › Offers internal partnership w/UTSA CoLFA
 - SAY Si
 - › nonprofit youth organization
- Materials and Fabrication:
 - Looking to partner with a business/company in a reciprocal relationship (like parts or materials stores) to perhaps provide discounts in exchange for business generated.
 - Collaboratively develop terms of making partnerships.

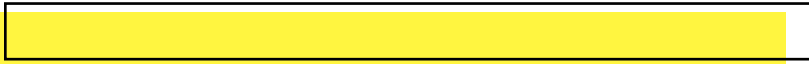
Possible Strategy:

- We recognize "the community are makers" and UFL is a facilitator/nexus of the support/resources they need to make Casitas.
- Creation of a maker space between university and community
 - Community provides housing stock in need of repair, open areas for ADUs to be constructed, supplies to be exchanged or bartered.
 - › Gains homes restored to code and multi-use ADUs
 - UTSA provides support in design and construction process and gains experiential learning
 - › Architecture students provide open source designs
 - › Engineering provides open source structural plans
 - › Construction science provides construction planning/approach
 - › Urban Planning provides support for policy/code navigation

- Build on existing economic and workforce development efforts to boost incomes
 - › Job/skills training programs increased during pandemic
- Maker space supported by a Community Design Center (CDC) within UTSA's Westside Community Center (WCC)
 - Social empowerment goals
 - › community leadership is essential for social change
 - › creating alternative markets for investment
 - In the community design model, the whole community is considered to be the developer, contractor, and end user.
 - CDC is not the architect(s) of record
 - › Instead, it becomes a teaching office
 - CDC emphasizes training and education, integrating the functions of community organizing, planning, finance, and architecture to support homeowners in the making of ADUs.

Possible Benefits

- For Westside
 - Westsiders design their own growth and maintain local identity
 - Bringing existing homes up to code
 - Casitas offer residents versatility and options, such as personal or family use, small business or workshop space, or rental units
 - Creates opportunities for entities and businesses on the Westside
 - › Exchange of materials, services, and knowledge
 - › Local considerations like materials provide monetary opportunities for Westside businesses
 - Collective making: people leading changes to benefit community
 - Narratives: makers narratives, local narratives, Puro
- For UTSA
 - Offering designs for free is a great precedent how UTSA's School of Architecture can directly contribute
 - CDC solidifies the multi-purpose, reciprocal nature of the WCC by promoting it as a "teaching and learning office"
 - Universities are uniquely positioned to support shared access to and use of design knowledge, merging education w/social activism
 - UTSA as a Hispanic Serving Institution: project involves students in community initiatives and cultural exchange we find valuable



- For both
 - Making infill: Casitas contribute to incremental development of both housing and community resources (markets, restaurants, laundromats, etc) to encourage walkability and neighborhood experience/placemaking
 - Experiential learning: connecting students and community in the making process
 - Reciprocal and sustainable solution for both UTSA and community.

Possible Stakeholders

Have a vested interest in the “making” aspect and can either affect or be affected by the project

- The Westside just became a cultural arts district (El Mero Weso) and a capital improvements project began in the Zona Cultural District in 2021.
 - These designations/initiatives attract artists and cultural entities/orgs to the area and support existing ones, which can provide community resources for the project.
 - Project strengthens these efforts through community-driven placemaking
- Businesses
 - Materials and Parts: Target our approach to first engage with businesses who provide materials and parts in the community. Where do local residents routinely buy materials/parts?
 - Choice of partner or identification of stakeholder in this area is important. It’ll determine if this is actually a strategic partnership (low cost or discount) or more of a stakeholder relationship (services paid for or exchanged).

Making Summary for the Westside:

By activating the Westside’s community of makers, the local identity of the historic area can be maintained. It is sustainable for residents, who are given an opportunity to bring existing homes up to code and make Casitas through community collaboration. Knowledge, services, materials, and labor are exchanged between the university and the community in this reciprocal relationship. Through a participatory process, the benefits are defined, understood by all, and mutually sought. Casitas (or ADUs) offer residents versatility in their investment with many options, such as personal or family use, small business or workshop space, or rental units. The community provides housing stock in need of repair or open areas where an ADU can be constructed; shares making knowledge; may have supplies that can be exchanged or bartered; and collaborates with UTSA students and faculty during the construction process. The university will engage the community and its makers through workshops and events to identify needs and aspirations; work with partners to assess existing environmental, housing, and site conditions; share resulting information and design knowledge in an understandable format; create a range of relevant design options and strategies; and collaborate with the community and partners to identify actions and activities that support individualized plans and paths forward.

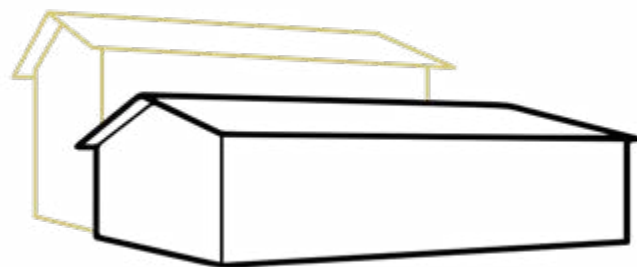


Figure 3: Casita Diagram

5. Code and Zoning Advocacy

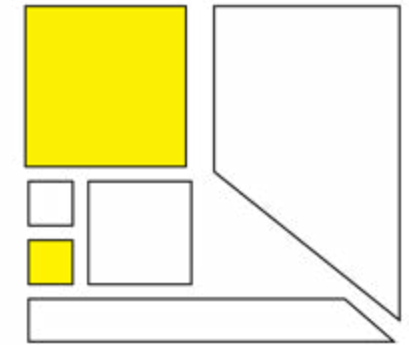
Summary: We see our role as educators in advocating for code and zoning reform to provide equitable, inclusive, and just environments. We are not activists but activators, activating residents to create new economic opportunities amid rising housing costs and property taxes.

Possible Purpose
Explanation of challenges necessitating code changes

- While the City of San Antonio’s current zoning laws allow for construction of ADUs on single family lots, a challenge presented by San Antonio’s Unified Development Code is that the homeowner must reside in either the primary structure or ADU.
- Another known challenge is that existing structures must be up to code before any new structure can be built on the same lot. This challenge would come into play at the stage of the process when an inspector would become involved in granting a permit for an ADU to be constructed on the scale of an individual lot.
- ADUs are limited to one per lot and cannot exceed 800 square feet or 40% of the primary structure’s footprint. The ADU can be built anywhere on the lot, attached or detached from the main structure, but the maximum occupancy is three people.

Possible strategies

- Due to a large percentage of renter-occupied homes on the Westside we propose a code change allowing homeowners to live off-site and rent out both the main front house and the ADU.



- Regarding existing structures that must be brought up to code before an ADU can be constructed, we are having a hard time finding specific details about this in writing, on city websites or within other resources we are looking to for guidance, to understand the criteria or requirements an inspector would operate under in this circumstance. It feels a bit like hearsay at this point: a perceived roadblock for one aspect of the project and we are seeking clarification. We will continue to search for these specifics and ask questions from contacts we may have in the city to better understand this stage of the process.
- It would be advantageous to allow for greater occupancy of ADUs and more than one structure per lot. Widening the range of ADU types that can be constructed is the goal of many similar programs. This would facilitate incremental development and give even more financial ownership to residents.

Possible benefits to UTSA

- UTSA wants to foster and build community trust with the Westside. By participating in policy advocacy, it can build those bridges.

Possible benefits to partners

- Partners become advocates for the community
- Assist with managing gentrification
- Help residents and the Westside community in ways they need it most

Looking Forward

In addition to the approach detailed above, further opportunities and recommendations are included below, which consider topics with potential to enrich the Casita Project overall. This section includes both long-term and short-term opportunities and recommendations, utilizing existing city programs, budgets, university policy, and curriculum to further the relationship between the Westside and UTSA.

Possible Partners by Topic

- Advocacy

| Individual | Institutional |
|---------------------------|---|
| Voting | Elected Officials |
| City Council Meetings | Continuation of Property Tax Evaluation |
| Neighborhood Associations | Neighborhood Associations |
| Coalition Building | Joining a Coalition |

- Writing Policy

| Individual | Institutional |
|---------------------------|--|
| Neighborhood Associations | Terri Castillo, District 5 Council woman |
| Voting | UTSA's Institute of Economic Development |
| Coalition Building | SA Housing Authority SA Alternative Housing |
| | LISC Policy Team |

Possible stakeholders (who is impacted by the outcome of the project?)

- Internal
 - UTSA
 - > WCC + Institute of Economic Development
 - > Students + Faculty
 - Westside Residents
 - Strategic Partners
- External
 - Westside Community (or, San Antonio overall)
 - > Community Groups
 - Local Government / NGO
 - > San Antonio's Housing Authority
 - > SA Alternative Housing
 - Activists
 - Real Estate Flippers + Developers

Code and Zoning Advocacy Summary for the Westside:

What is at stake is the community's ability to maintain their residency and retain the history and character of the Westside neighborhood. As San Antonio's population increases, so do housing costs and property taxes throughout all communities. This especially impacts low-income homeowners. Ultimately, this is a question of displacement or continuity for Westside residents. To counteract this, it is essential that residents can create economic opportunities within their communities -- one way to achieve this is through more equitable, inclusive, and just land use with the addition of ADUs.



Opportunities

1. City of San Antonio's Owner-Occupied Rehab, Minor Repair, and Under 1 Roof programs

The City of San Antonio's (CoSA) Neighborhood & Housing Services Department could potentially be a collaborator to help bring existing homes up to code through these existing programs they run. In the program changes section of the FY22 CoSA Adopted Operating & Capital Budget, there is increased funding for all three programs because they are in high demand, with all slots for these programs having been filled with selected applicants for this fiscal year.

Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation

FY22 budget adds \$1.0 million for a total of \$10.4 million for Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation to increase the number of homes repaired from 73 to 81. The program assists qualified homeowners with low to moderate income rehabilitate their substandard and non-code compliant residential properties by providing forgivable loans to cover the cost of the needed repairs. These repairs focus on health and safety, accessibility, and major system concerns.

Minor Repair

FY22 budget adds \$2.0 million for a total of \$4.7 million for Minor Repair to increase the number of homes repaired from 101 to 175. The program addresses health and safety items such as plumbing, electrical, non-working utilities, broken windows, damaged doors, or other minor items in need of repair.

Under 1 Roof

FY22 budget adds \$1.0 million for a program total of \$5.25 million, \$3.25 million from the General Fund and \$2.0 million from TIRZ, for Under 1 Roof to increase the number of roofs replaced from 375 to 450. The Under One Roof Program replaces worn and damaged roofs with new, energy-efficient white shingle roofs for qualified homeowners. All projects use white, 3-tab asphalt shingles and reflective radiant barrier underlayment to increase energy savings and overall efficiency of the home. The City of San Antonio will place a restrictive covenant on the property requiring homeowners to maintain ownership and occupancy for five (5) years after project completion.

2. Housing policy: Proposed spending plan for affordable housing by the City of San Antonio's 2022-2027 Bond program

The UFL's strategic plan and proposal is strengthened by a housing policy component, illustrating UTSA's commitment to the community and to the idea of a social contract. Student housing numbers, population data, the rate of appreciation in home values, and other housing policy stats are being collected to make a case for the project to receive support from the City of San Antonio's proposed spending plan for affordable housing, part of the 2022-2027 Bond Program. The UFL's proposal furthers two important goals of the spending plan: maintain the city's older housing stock and create affordable housing. If received, bond funding could be provided to homeowners to repair existing homes and build ADUs to produce affordable rental units, while UTSA could assist in facilitating partnerships in this process.

Short-Term Recommendations

- \$150 million bond prioritizes homes facing demolition risk, rental units and homelessness: <https://sanantonioreport.org/san-antonio-panel-oks-spending-plan-150-million-housing-bond/>
 - \$150 million spending plan will largely target some of the most vulnerable San Antonians
 - \$45 million for home rehabilitation and preservation
 - \$35 million for production of rental units
 - The plan was reviewed by council in January. Council finalized the ballot language in February that ultimately went before voters in May.
 - Homeownership rehabilitation and preservation for households making up to 50% area median income while prioritizing 30% AMI
 - Rental housing production and acquisition to prioritize public and income-based housing for households making up to 50% AMI while prioritizing 30% AMI
 - Projects must serve San Antonio's "most vulnerable cost-burdened low-income populations"; prioritize neighborhoods with older housing stock and access to transit options; feature universal design (which accommodates people with diverse abilities); must not cause direct displacement of residents; accept housing vouchers; and follow tenant protection rules.
- Builds on existing relationships and activate symbiotic relationships between communities
 - UTSA's priority is to create safe homes for students near campus
 - Westside's priority is to maintain affordability and identity

Planning students can investigate policy issues of the Westside and assist in policy advocacy, Architecture students can develop and provide open-source plans for casitas, and Construction Science as well as Architecture students can gain design-build experience assisting in the building process of the casitas. All of this will enrich student's learning experiences while providing a needed service in the production of casitas as well as ensuring affordability through volunteer/course credit efforts.

4. One of the newest city-initiated Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) is on the Westside

- A TIRZ can be created by:
- Petition of property owners in the TIRZ, known as "petition-initiated" or
- Designated by the City, known as "city-initiated."

City-initiated TIRZ are designated as a response to a community need identified by the City. They are unique in that there is typically not a single developer to manage each project. In such cases, TIF staff would evaluate the projects to identify eligible expenses, coordinate the preparation and negotiation of legal documents, monitor construction, process reimbursement requests and monitor compliance.

Westside #30

One of the newest city-initiated TIRZ, designated in 2009, [Westside #30](#) comprises approximately 1,531 acres located west of the central business district. The term of the zone is anticipated to extend through fiscal year 2033. Its location near a vibrant, tourist rich area and its many cultural assets will aid in its development.

- Significant Projects
 - Development projects are currently being proposed and negotiated. Other catalytic improvements are in the works to make this TIRZ a highly successful one.
 - Project and Finance Plans are pending.

Links to:

[Westside #30 Project Plan](#)
[TIRZ Boundary Map](#)

1. Urban Future Lab's proposed role as conveners, facilitators, and advocates

At the UFL we would like to serve as conveners, facilitators, and advocates in the Casita Project. As conveners, we envision ourselves responsible for bringing people together from multiple sectors for a multi-meeting process to discuss, analyze, collaborate, and act upon the complex issues at hand for the collective benefit of all involved. Among other sectors, we plan to convene the university, community, public officials, neighborhood association leaders and residents, business professionals, and leaders of community and nonprofit organizations. An example of our proposed actions as a facilitator is explained above in Recommendation 1, as an avenue of technical assistance to residents of underserved areas of the city, such as the Westside, to help them apply for accessible city home repair programs. The popular programs already exist and thrive in the community, their funding has increased, and the city needs more homeowners to apply. The programs could jumpstart the Casita Project by bringing individual homes up to code with repairs paid for with city funding. We propose the UFL connects with the community and program representatives to facilitate program applications from targeted Westside neighborhoods whose residents are interested in making Casitas.

As the UFL meets with residents and helps them through these processes, we discover the challenges on the ground, and are best positioned to become activators for constituents of our most vulnerable neighborhoods. By helping individuals find their way through these policies we discover how nuanced adjustments can address issues of equality.

Case Study: cityLAB's BIHOME project

The BIHOME is an energy-efficient and low-water consuming lightweight cottage designed to be located in the backyards of homes in Los Angeles as a home for people while also creating a backyard habitat for other species. Along with developing the prototype, cityLAB co-authored AB2299, the law that essentially ended single family zoning in California by enabling the legal addition of rental units to homes. This was an important step in helping the housing and environmental crisis in LA. At the UFL, we carefully chose cityLAB's BIHOME project as a case study because of LA's demographic, economic,

and socio-cultural challenges. UCLA accelerated as a research university within these frameworks, while cityLAB saw opportunities and activated them with their proposal. Read more about cityLAB's projects in the Appendix, under "Zoning, Code, and Policy Challenges."

2. Urban Future Lab's list of potential collaborators and proposed sequence of events to jumpstart the Casita Project

Over the course of developing this strategic plan, we curated a list of potential collaborators and entities, both internal and external, with whom we would like to connect with to jumpstart the Casita Project. Our proposed list and sequence of events contains university administration and partnering departments; city officials, organizations, and nonprofits; financing agencies; local businesses; housing and neighborhood organizations and representatives. Our recommendation is to move forward connecting and meeting with those on the list. [\(see page 26 for sequence\).](#)

3. Increased funding, technical assistance, and eligibility for Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, Minor Repair, and Under 1 Roof Programs

High demand for these essential programs show how much they are needed in the community. To broaden the impact of the programs, we advocate for increased funding for the programs, while our recommendations include a facilitation component and a policy component. We recommend the city augments technical assistance provided to residents of underserved areas of the city, such as the Westside, to help them apply for these accessible home repair programs. The UFL's role would be that of a facilitator, promoting interaction between community leaders, their resources, and residents to appropriately target the neighborhoods and individuals who would most benefit from these programs.

Regarding policy, we also recommend the city pursues modifications to current eligibility requirements to increase the number of households served. For example, Owner-Occupied Rehab currently requires that homeowners be U.S. citizens and have a clear title, and that household gross income must be at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) limits.

Sequence of Events timeline

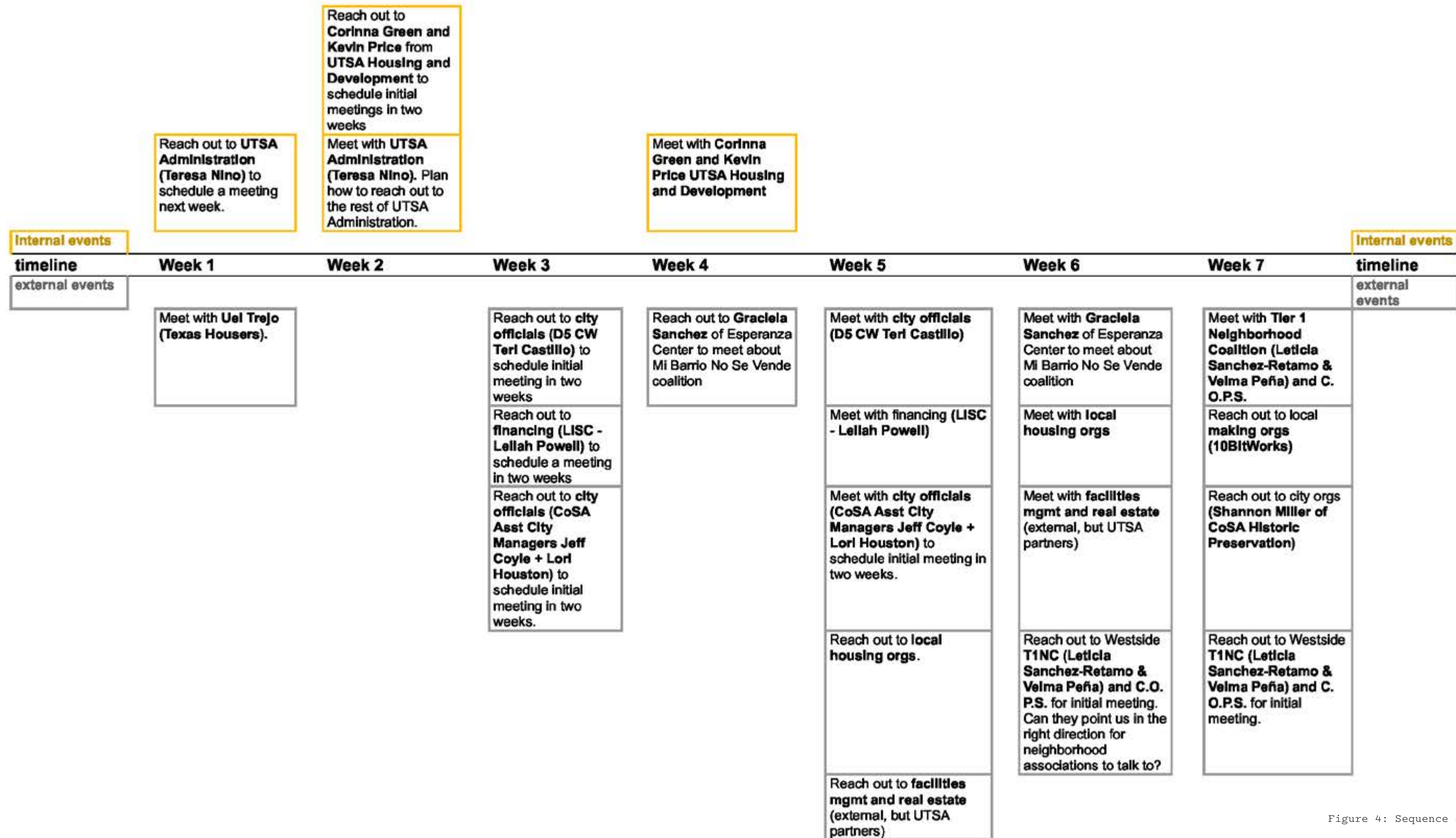


Figure 4: Sequence of events timeline

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Policy, zoning and code changes in the Unified Development Code (UDC) of San Antonio to transform the zone of single-family housing into one of incremental density.

While the City of San Antonio's current zoning laws allow for construction of ADUs on single family lots, a challenge presented by San Antonio's UDC is that the homeowner must reside in either the primary structure or ADU. This can present a challenge for multigenerational living situations, in which the homeowner shares the property with family members who reside in the home and who may be interested in developing the property (with the homeowner's permission) to improve their socioeconomic standing. Due to a large percentage of renter-occupied homes on the Westside, we propose a code change allowing homeowners to live off-site and rent out both the main front house and the ADU.

Another known challenge is that ADUs are limited to one per lot and cannot exceed 800 square feet or 40% of the primary structure's footprint. The ADU can be built anywhere on the lot, attached or detached from the main structure, but the maximum occupancy is three people. We propose a code change allowing for greater occupancy of ADUs and more than one structure per lot. Widening the range of ADU types that can be constructed is a goal of many similar programs. This would facilitate incremental development and give even more financial ownership to residents.

2. Hold a community event.

We would like to hold an event to discuss matters with the community, stakeholders, local city officials, and the public to present the UFL's strategic plan for the Westside, receive input, and discuss possible avenues for implementation. Panelists invited to participate would include local experts and community advocates speaking about topics including, but not limited to, social contracts, ADUs, tenant programs, tax alleviation, microfinancing, making and makerspaces, codes and zoning, housing policy, affordable housing, CoSA's 2022-2027 Bond program, equality vs. equity related to the bond, city-funded home repair programs, housing as a human right, and landlord and tenant rights ■



Figure 5: Bienvenidos al Westside Mural

Appendix:

Housing Market Research

To read more background information that was foundational to the project, see doc [here](#)

How have other universities approached community development?

See a doc comparing different approaches [here](#)

Social Contract

To see what we mean by a social contract, see doc [here](#)

Every relationship begins as a social contract in some form as part of shared values.

Zoning, Code, and Policy Challenges

To read more about challenges in these areas, see doc [here](#)