Session Spotlight: Delivering on a City Vision

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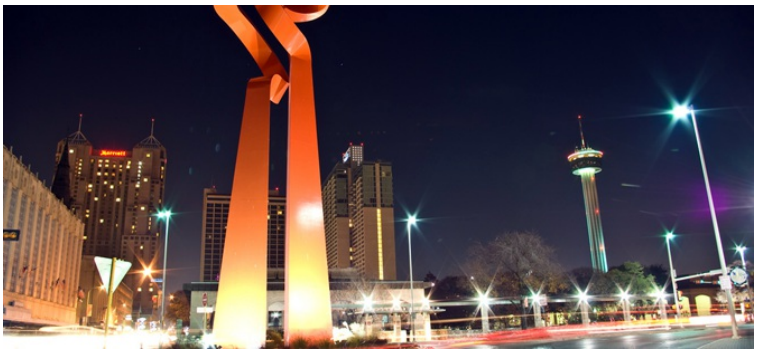

San Antonio. (Credit: Corey Leopold, Flickr)

Year of the Dragon. Summer of Love. Time-stamping cultural movements isn't a new phenomenon, but the "Decade of Downtown" is.

Declared by San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro, the Decade of Downtown heralds a shift toward developing San Antonio's downtown neighborhoods. The only question that remains is: How?

In their Greenbuild 2012 education session, "Dream It, Map It, Do It: Delivering on a City Vision," three industry pros weigh in how to reimagine San Antonio's downtown sustainably – and how to apply their community's thinking to your own downtown redesign project.

Below, Darryl Byrd, CEO of SA2020; William Shown, Managing Director at Silver Ventures, Inc. & Rio Perla Properties; and David Lake, Principal of Lake/Flato Architects, give an inside look at their forthcoming Greenbuild session.

What's the topical focus of your session?

Darryl Byrd: A discussion on how big ideas for community transformation, when truly born from a vision created, shared and owned by the citizens, emerges into reality through deliberate, focused and sustained investments at the project, neighborhoods and citywide levels.

William Shown: Redeveloping central cities with a big, aspirational vision that is created by the community at large.

David Lake: The session will focus on how San Antonio's citizens have shaped a plan to revitalize the city's downtown area and transform it into a sustainable village.

Why is the topic of your session important?

DB: I believe there is much greater opportunity for extraordinary things to be created in America's cIties when there is both OWNERSHIP and ACCOUNTABILITY for the outcomes - BEGINNING with the citizens.

WS: Because small dreams often lead to small results, and big, powerful, aspirational and community-based visions can make big things happen and lead to true transformation of communities.

DL: This topic is important because of the applicability of the process. Revitalization of cities' downtown areas is essential to creating sustainable communities.

Why should Greenbuild attendees attend YOUR session specifically?

DB: I would encourage folks who (1) embrace the idea of declaring and acting on BOLD visions for their communities and cities vs. the incrementalism of continuous improvement and (2) who recognize that bringing more fuel (the citizens and not just the usual leadership suspects) to the engine is critical to traveling a greater distance.

WS: To see a great example of community outreach and consensus and the power that it has to actually get things done.

DL: We will discuss how to apply this process in cities across the world.

What's the most interesting experience you've had in the green building/sustainability world?

DB: Still waiting...

WS: The creativity and change in mindset that green building encourages has been most interesting. As an example, while pursuing our first LEED Gold certified building at Pearl we demolished the concrete foundation of half of a very large warehouse. Rather than dispose of the rubble in a landfill as planned we reached out to the contractor that was improving the adjacent San Antonio Riverwalk. As it happened, they needed the rubble as a working surface in the riverbed and agreed to move it at their expense, saving us both money, reducing waste in the landfill, and consuming significantly less fuel than anticipated. It was a classic win-win situation.

DL: I have enjoyed moving beyond Lake|Flato's contextual, site-specific approach to truly integrated systems and communities.

What's the most interesting non-green building related fact about yourself?

DB: If I had it to do all over again, I would have studied cosmology - as my head is almost literally always in the clouds.

WS: I'm a pretty good sushi chef.

DL: I have always enjoyed being outdoors and moving through landscapes of various types. I especially enjoy sketching and watercolor of rocks and water. Rocks and water -- That's my deal. My son asks me why that's all I draw, and my answer is that trees are too hard to do.

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