

Municipality of San Antonio, Texas, United States of America
Jean-Paul-L'Allier Prize for Heritage 2026
WORLD HERITAGE CENTER
Regenerate the Urban Environment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Municipality of San Antonio, Texas, submits to the Jean-Paul-L'Allier Prize for Heritage the City of San Antonio's World Heritage Center.


San Antonio, Texas, is a city where its rich cultural heritage and rapid urban growth are deeply intertwined. Founded in 1718, it is the oldest major settlement in Texas and home to the historic San Antonio Missions, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Over the centuries, the city has evolved from a Spanish colonial outpost to the sixth largest city in the United States. With approximately 1.5 million people, the city was shaped by Indigenous, Spanish, Mexican, and European influences.

San Antonio presents a unique and dynamic multi-cultural city that is a mixture of historic and modern development. Its colonial architecture, multicultural landscape, and diverse communities depict how balancing preservation with growth is essential to navigate the challenges of safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage, while fostering sustainable urban development.

A community-driven project, the World Heritage Center demonstrates the City of San Antonio's commitment to enhancing livability in the World Heritage area while safeguarding the authenticity of surrounding neighborhoods and their historic mission communities. Since its opening in February 2025, the Center has served as a community anchor. A multi-use space, it integrates cultural and historic interpretation, public programming, education, and community engagement, supporting community well-being, thus improving livability and strengthening the local community.

Located within the World Heritage Buffer Zone, adjacent to Mission San Jose and situated on the *labores* (farmland) of the mission, visitors can immerse themselves in the *corazon* (heart) of the rich cultural heritage of the people of San Antonio and the mission communities. The redevelopment of these historic lands continues to be a community-driven initiative, demonstrating good governance, strategic development, and a commitment to inclusivity as levers for urban transformation and enhanced quality of life. Today, the World Heritage Center is a significant and meaningful part of the historic and cultural fabric of the landscape and the community.

The candidacy is coordinated by Colleen Swain, Director, email: Colleen.Swain@sanantonio.gov


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