

San Antonio CityFest

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

November 7, 2023

- Good morning, everyone. ¡Buenos días! I can't begin to tell you what an honor it is to be here in my hometown as the director of our U.S. Census Bureau.
- I'm home! I'm with familia!
- As you can see, I'm really happy to be here.
- After all, I am who I am because of this great city. I'm so grateful for what San Antonio and its people have given me.
- I spent the first 21 year of my life here—from birth at Santa Rosa to graduation at Trinity University.
- So, let me tell you a little about that time in my life because it has relevance to CityFest.
- I attended elementary school at Little Flower, taught by Irish nuns.
- During that time, I fished Woodlawn Lake, sometimes daily.
- Oh... and, by the way, I DID use my mom's tortilla masa for fishing bait.
- Worms were just too messy and gooey, and the masa worked great.
- By the way, Woodlawn Lake dates back to the 1880s.
- It wouldn't be the recreational gem it is without improvements under Roosevelt's New Deal in the 30s, and continuous improvements over the last century.
- If you think about it, San Antonio "met the moment" with public works project during the great depression.
- But let me talk a little more about how I saw this great city meeting the moment while I was growing up.
- In my adolescent years, we had HemisFair!
- Think about it... A world's fair in our own backyard in 1968.
- Now, it was extra special for me because I was a latchkey kid.
- During summer break, my buddies and I would grab our bikes and head across town to watch the demolition and construction.
- We saw firsthand the Tower of the Americas being raised.
- The world's fair was made possible by folks you may remember—President Johnson, John Connally, Henry B Gonzalez, and many others.
- Once again, San Antonio met the moment, bringing jobs and economic growth to a city in great need.
- Now, the theme of HemisFair was "The Confluence of Civilizations in the Americas."
- It capitalized on Texas and San Antonio's diverse cultural heritage.
- Indeed, our history and multicultural background is a tremendous city asset.
- San Antonio continues to evolve and draw strength from its cultural heritage.
- But I digress... so let me get back to my San Anto experience.
- As a teen, I attended a memorable dance at my high school—Holy Cross—featuring the one and only Sunny Ozuna... Sunny and the Sunliners.
- Hey old timers, viejitos, remember? "Talk to me..." Those were enchanting times in the city.

- Some of you may know that I spent my first semester of college at SAC.
- I hold fond memories of my short time there.
- Thanks to a wonderful mathematics teacher at SAC, I transferred to Trinity University.
- Trinity treated me exceptionally well even though I was a nontraditional married student pretty much the whole time I attended.
- No dorms for me. I was a commuter with a lovely wife and a small apartment near Jefferson High School.
- And by the way, my wife Della and I celebrated our 50th anniversary this month.
- It was Trinity University's education that got me into grad school at the University of Michigan Department of Statistics.
- So thank you for that, Trinity U and SAC!
 - And mil gracias to Holy Cross and Little Flower.
- Y'know, we left San Antonio in 1976, almost half a century ago... but it almost feels like yesterday.
- It doesn't matter how long I've been away from San Antonio... it will always be home for me.
- And I fully expect that someday we'll move back to nuestra pueblito.
- Yet, now—as a Washington DC, resident—I find myself here before you, back in my hometown, addressing you as the first Latino director of the largest federal statistical agency in the nation, the U.S. Census Bureau.
- It's quite humbling and very special to me.
- So let's get on with the show...
- Now... the theme of CityFest this year is "Meet the Moment."
- The city is experiencing exciting milestones, right before our very eyes.
- San Antonio has been named one of the fastest growing cities in the nation.
- And I heard the Spurs scored one heck of a draft pick.
- And from all I've seen, the city continues blossom as a cultural mecca, embracing its Mexican and Tejano heritage.
- Now, having been born and raised here, I'd like to add another dimension to this conversation:
 - The amazing, inherent resilience of this city.
 - Over the years, it's the city's resilience that has helped mitigate challenges like a global pandemic.
 - The closure of Kelly Air Force Base.
 - And before that having to deal with the aftermath of HemisFair.
- I think it's the city's resilience that has positioned San Antonio well in meeting the moment.

Changing demographics

- So, let's explore the moment with data!
- After all, providing statistical data is what the Census Bureau does.
- I'll start at the national level and then dive down to the state and city.
- Now, our nation is constantly changing... evolving... growing.
- To give you a taste, here are some findings from our 2020 Decennial Census that may interest you:
- First and foremost, *our nation is increasingly diverse*.
- The overall racial and ethnic diversity of the country has increased since 2010.

- One group that has experienced growth and demographic change is the Hispanic/Latino population.
 - Eight Hispanic subgroups, like Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and so on... eight reached a million or more in population in 2020 in the United States.
 - This includes Colombian and Honduran populations; they reached that population milestone for the first time in census history.
 - And did you know that in 2020 1 in 4 of ALL children in the United States were Latino?
- Here is another important change to think about.
- Our nation is getting older. The U.S. population in 2020 was older than in 2010 or even 2000.
- Over the last century, the population aged 65 and over grew nearly five times faster than total population did.
- That's why a lot of policy folks talk about the silver tsunami... the growing senior population... of which I am one, by the way.
- Hey, in 2020, about 1 in 6 people in the United States were aged 65 and over.
- But back in 1920, it was less than 1 in 20.
- Think about that. Baby boomers like me are aging...
- Now let's talk a little about national housing.
- The housing count in the United States grew by 6.7 percent between 2010 and 2020.
- That's about half the growth rate of the previous decade.
- But here's the kicker... the growth was not equal across metropolitan and even micropolitan areas, for that matter.
- Additionally, we've seen shifts in work patterns, specifically a rise in remote work and gig work.
- These shifts appear to have been accelerated by the pandemic.
- And that has been accompanied adjustments in housing and commuting patterns.
- Of course, change is occurring here in Texas and San Antonio.
- Now, former Census Bureau director as well as demographer of the State of Texas—the late Steve Murdoch—once made a profound statement:
 - He said “If you want to see what the future will look like, look to San Antonio.”
 - I happen to think he was right.
 - In many ways, this city—and this state more generally—is a microcosm of America.
- In fact, San Antonio may well be ahead of the curve.
 - The city was third on the Census Bureau's list of fastest-growing cities...
 - And San Antonio had the third-largest numeric population gain since 2021.
 - People are moving here.... A lot of people.
- San Antonio is now the nation's seventh largest city in 2020.
 - The city's population now tops 1.4 million, and approaching 1.5.
 - The city grew by a whopping 8.1 percent between 2010 and 2020.
- To put all this into perspective, San Antonio wasn't always one of the 10 biggest cities in the country.
 - Back in 1950 it was only the 25th largest city.
 - It was smaller than St Louis, and Cincinnati and Milwaukee.
 - Fast forward almost three quarters of century, and the city is the seventh largest in the nation.

- Now, the Census Bureau has several tools to gauge population diversity—how similar or different we are.
- In particular, one is called the *diversity index*.
 - Say you take a community or city or a state, and pick two people at random from it.
 - The diversity index reflects the chance that those two have *different* race-ethnicities. OK?
- Well, it turns out that in 2020, Texas had one of the highest diversity index rankings in our nation.
- To illustrate, 39 percent of Texas' 2020 population is of Hispanic or Latino population.
- And about 40 percent of Texas' population in 2020 was non-Hispanic White....
- Meaning that a strong majority—about 60 percent—of the state's population is made up of people of color.
- Now, the state's diversity goes far beyond that.
 - Texas is home to the largest *Nigerian* community in the nation, roughly 117,000 strong and twice that of any other state.
 - This state now has more than a half million *Asian Indians*—second only to California.
 - And it also has the largest *Pakistani* community in the 2020 Census—about 110,000.
- So let's turn to housing.... People need a place to live, so if the state population is growing, housing should grow as well... And it did.
- Texas added the most housing units of any state in 2020, totaling more than 1.6 million.
- To give the full picture, more than half of Texas counties are experiencing housing *decreases*.
- But that reflects the concentration of housing growth in larger metropolitan counties like San Antonio.
- And frankly, much of Texas' growth appears to be occurring in the Texas Triangle—the geographic area bounded by Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio.
- The Texas Triangle appears destined to form a single, massive megalopolis, one that this city will be a part of.
- But, yes, San Antonio is changing in some ways, but not so much in others.
- For instance, consider these statistics:
 - The City population grew by just under 19,000 between 2021 and 2022, which is the third fastest in the country.
 - The city remains heavily Latino, with 2 out of 3 residents being Hispanic.
 - The city is multilingual... 42 percent of households speak a language other than English at home.
 - And the city remains challenged by poverty, with 18 percent of the population in poverty, which is higher than the national average of 13.
- Now I happen to think of the diversity of San Antonio as an asset, as a strength.
- And on top of that, there is the city's cultural heritage.
- You see it everywhere. It's truly amazing and heartwarming.
- We witness beautiful artwork debarking at the airport, or walking down San Pedro springs, or visiting the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, or participating in Fiesta Week or the many cultural events too numerous to list out.
- The city and its people draw strength and pride from *nuestra cultura*.
- It's an asset and a strength that can be leveraged in "meeting the moment."
- And yet, there remain challenges of housing affordability, poverty, economic development, and even community development in the midst of striking population growth.
- But these challenges are best addressed from a foundation of knowledge, from an evidence base.

- Data driven insights allow informed decision-making, which in turn can enhance urban and economic planning.
- And that's where the Census Bureau comes in.
- Yes, we can help you "Meet the Moment."
- How?
- Well, our *American Community Surveys* provide a treasure trove of data that paint a portrait of the city's population and housing.
- We offer data at state, county, city, and even census tract levels on topics such as race, ethnicity, sex, disability stats, income, poverty, education, veteran status, plus housing and many other key sociodemographic variables.
- Y'know, most policy at federal, state, and local levels is developed using American Community Survey data.
- It would be wonderful for San Antonio to get the full benefit of these data, too.
- We also have rich economic data from our economic census that breaks out businesses by size, industry classification, production and sales, number of employees, and even the race-ethnicity of the owner... all at various levels of geography.
- And of course, we provided resources like data visualizations, webinars, and how-to guides to help local government and communities access and use our data.
- We're constantly working to better meet your data needs.
- In fact, let me tell you about three tools we've created great tools specifically to help communities, businesses, and governments.
 - First, there's the *My Community Explorer* dashboard. It provides demographic, business, and resilience information for states, counties, and communities.
 - The data are presented in maps, interactive dashboards, and tables.
 - Next is the *Census Business Builder*. It combines economic and demographic data at state and county levels that help entrepreneurs and businesses decide on where to start a business or build a manufacturing plant.
 - And lastly, here's a tool that both people and businesses may find really interesting.
 - It's called the *Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes* tool.
 - We calculate earnings and employment outcomes for college and university graduates by degree level, degree major, and institution, including some in San Antonio, like UTSA and SAC.
 - For instance, it estimates the average income a bachelor's graduate would make with a major in business administration or music or math at 1 year, 5 years and 10 years from graduation.
- Hopefully, I've whetted your appetite for the data we have that can help everyone "meet the moment."
- Truth be known, I've not even scratched the surface.
- There's a lot more data available, and we're eager to share it all with you.
- To help with that, allow me to point out a great, local resource—the Texas Demographic Center at the UTSA.
- The Center is part of the broader State Data Center network that helps make our data available to state and local government as well as local communities.
- So, if you're interested in accessing our data, I encourage you to contact them.
- The Census Bureau also has data dissemination specialists whose job it is to provide training and assistance to the public on all our products.

UTSA Memorandum of Understanding

- Oh... speaking of UTSA... I would be remiss if I didn't mention an agreement we signed with UTSA earlier this year.
- The goal is to collaborate on projects that help us collect better data as well as to facilitate the development of a more diverse Census Bureau workforce.
- This partnership and others like it are a critical part of our effort to engage the public... to empower communities with the data they need to make informed decisions.
- It will also open doors for UTSA students to seek internships and career opportunities at the Census Bureau.
- In some sense, I'd like to think our UTSA—Census Bureau partnership is contributing to "Meeting the Moment."

Conclusion

- I'll leave you with this thought.
- I've always seen challenges and even obstacles as fodder for opportunity.
- You just have to think about them differently... to see the opportunity that others don't see.
- That's why I believe great things lie ahead for San Antonio.
- By tapping our creativity, our passion for helping each other, and the cultural strength of the city, I believe the city of San Antonio will thrive like never before... and so will its residents.
- Just know that the Census Bureau is here to help with a bounty of data for your informed decision-making and planning.
- Thank you so much for the honor of addressing you.
- I look forward to your questions.