

San Antonio's River Walk Expansion Leads Nation in Urban Ecosystem Restoration

Written by Australian Business

Breathing life back into the river that inspired one of America's most culturally rich destinations

SAN ANTONIO, Oct. 5, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Famed for iconic history and a bold and beautiful culture, San Antonio is gaining recognition as home of the nation's largest urban ecosystem restoration project with the expansion of the River Walk. With its grand opening set for Oct. 5, the completed Mission Reach brings to life a revived, eight-mile stretch of the San Antonio River.

(Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20131005/DC92548>)

Bringing back lost riparian and aquatic habitat, inspiring the return of numerous animal species and encouraging the interest of numerous cities from nations all around the world who are looking to replicate similar projects are just the beginning of how this restoration will impact San Antonio and the global community.

The picturesque River Walk and the Alamo are what many call to mind when thinking of San Antonio. Built in the 1930s, the original River Walk winds through historic downtown connecting restaurants, shops, theaters and historic sites. It is one of the most-visited sites in Texas and one of the most-recognized attractions in the United States.

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The Mission Reach, a southern section of the San Antonio River is of particular historical significance as it links four 18th century missions, the largest collection of Spanish colonial architecture in North America. In years since the establishment of these missions almost 300 years ago, this stretch of the river's original route, beauty and life had been lost. In the 1950s, after years of devastating floods, the Mission Reach was engineered into a trapezoidal storm water channel by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. Though it worked well for flood control, the change left this area devoid of native plant life and with a diminished aquatic habitat.

The current restoration will bring back the river's natural environments and aquatic habitat as well as the addition of over 23,000 new trees (over 40 native species) and hundreds of acres of native grasses and wildflowers (over 60 species). Features will also include hiking, biking and paddling (e.g., canoeing or kayaking) opportunities to reconnect people with the river.

By cultivating this drainage channel back into a functioning part of the San Antonio River, San Antonio is becoming a world leader in urban ecosystem restoration.

Representatives of cities from countries such as China, India, Japan, South Korea, Israel, Malaysia

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Germany

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Canada

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Mexico

and Taiwan have visited the Mission Reach in the spirit of recapturing aspects of this project for their own communities.

With a total investment of \$358.3 million, the San Antonio River Improvements Project provides immense potential for further economic development. Improving the function and landscape of this traditionally economically challenged section of San Antonio

will hopefully inspire further development and improve the quality of life for surrounding residents. It also provides another offering for San Antonio's

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highly successful tourism industry which employs one out of eight residents and contributes some \$12 billion into the economy annually.

For more information on San Antonio's beautiful natural sites, go to visitsanantonio.com .

For more information: Eva Aivaliotis, Brand Manager San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau 210-207-6920 evaivaliotis@visitsanantonio.com

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