



For Immediate Release

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San Antonio River Expanding Its Reach

Community leaders break ground on next phase of River Improvements Project

(May 8, 2007) SAN ANTONIO – Mayor Phil Hardberger and Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff joined Louis Rowe, of the San Antonio River Authority, and other representatives from the San Antonio River Improvements Project (SARIP) on Tuesday to break ground on the Museum Reach-Urban Segment portion of the SARIP. The Museum Reach Urban-Segment extends the world-famous River Walk approximately 1.5 miles from Lexington Avenue to Josephine Street. SARIP is a monumental initiative that will expand access to the city’s greatest natural resource by creating a 13-mile long linear park along the San Antonio River through the heart of the community.

“The San Antonio River Improvements Project represents the best of inter-governmental cooperation and public-private partnership,” said Louis Rowe, chairman of the board of the San Antonio River Authority. “The City of San Antonio, Bexar County, the San Antonio River Authority, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the San Antonio River Oversight Committee and the San Antonio River Foundation all have played major roles in developing, coordinating and funding this project.”

The \$68.4 million Museum Reach-Urban Segment is funded by city, county and private donations raised by the San Antonio River Foundation. Construction on the two-year improvements project will extend the distinctive San Antonio River Walk experience to an undeveloped section of the river north of downtown and will include a lock and dam system, scenic overlooks, boat landings, walkways, landscaping, lighting, water features and pocket parks.

“The Museum Reach project will extend access to the river and will lay the groundwork for possible commercial, residential and retail development in the area,” Hardberger said. “The Museum Reach has tremendous economic development potential, but perhaps the greatest legacy of this project will be the river linkage it provides to some of our city’s greatest cultural and recreational treasures: the San Antonio Museum of Art, Brackenridge Park and ultimately the Witte Museum and the San Antonio Zoo.”

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The Museum Reach will become an ideal location for multi-family residential development along with small businesses and restaurants, shops and coffee houses. The area will support both rental apartments and for-sale condominium units with the most attractive development opportunities falling directly along the river, but in time expanding to the blocks behind the river corridor. Hotel and entertainment development is also expected along the Museum Reach.

In addition to the Museum Reach, there are plans for an 8-mile segment of the River Improvements Project south of downtown. This section—called the Mission Reach—will extend from South Alamo to Mission Espada, just below Loop 410. In all, the River Improvements Project will provide access to an additional 13 miles of the San Antonio River and is scheduled for completion by 2012.

“When both sections are finished, the result will be a true linear park that provides a link between the northern and southern sectors of the city,” Wolff said. “Beyond this, the project will also create new recreational opportunities, restore the river’s natural ecosystem, offer increased flood protection, allow for new economic opportunity and provide a cultural link back to our historic Missions. Most importantly, we can all feel very good about this project because it is truly a product of the community.”

The expected patterns of development within the San Antonio River Improvements Project should add significantly to the area’s tax base, as the sales, property and hotel taxes to the City derived from development in the region should approach \$9.3 million annually. When the ripple effects through the community of increased economic activity are considered, the total annual tax impact to the City should exceed \$12.5 million each year.

“Today’s groundbreaking is the result of a true, concerted effort to revitalize the river that began almost ten years ago in 1998, when Bexar County, the City of San Antonio and the San Antonio River Authority created the San Antonio River Oversight Committee,” said Lila Cockrell, Co-Chair of the San Antonio River Oversight Committee. Irby Hightower is the other Co-Chair of the San Antonio River Oversight Committee, which is a committee of 22 civic and neighborhood organizations who were given the responsibility of overseeing the planning, design, project management, construction and funding necessary to complete the project.

Local construction company, Zachry Construction Corporation, which was awarded the \$49.8 million Museum Reach-Urban Segment contract in April, broke ground on the project immediately following the press conference. Throughout the entire project, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) will provide project and technical management and overall project coordination between project partners.