

Early History of San Antonio Ranch and the Establishment of the San Antonio Municipal Utility District No. 1

The San Antonio Ranch (SAR) began as a limited partnership for real estate investment in 1968 known then as New Town Management, Inc. The land was acquired by the partnership lead by Hayden Head for \$165 per acre. By 1972 Mr. Head, who became a federal judge based in the Corpus Christi area, had bought out his partners and claimed the name of San Antonio Ranch for this holding.

SAR planning called for a 30-year development (1974-2003) in which ultimately the population would be 87,972. SAR was to have a full range of land uses, including residential, commercial, office, industrial, recreational and public facilities. A total of 17,660 jobs were to be provided by the development and SAR would encompass approximately 8,350 acres.

The firm of Christian, Miller and Honts (CMH) was employed as the principal developers of SAR. In 1971, CMH applied for a federal loan guarantee under Title IV of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Act of 1968 for a new community university town and possible future site for the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA).

Problems began early in the project when UTSA was established on donated land from other sources. This action forced CMH to amend the pre-application with HUD with a focus on a “technical center” for skills training which would serve to attract Mexican Americans from the inner city of San Antonio to live and work at SAR. HUD Assistant Secretary, Samuel C. Jackson, had been actively soliciting programs focused on minority groups for new communities and the SAR proposal fit the bill. HUD agreed to the concept and saw this as a unique project, which would justify renewed top priority. CMH ultimately received a commitment of an \$18M loan guarantee from HUD under the then Title VII of the HUD Act of 1970. The SAR development ultimately fell under Title X, when CMH received \$6.5M from HUD between 1976-78 and another \$4.4M in 1980.

The project went through an official A-95 review by the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) in March 1971 concurrently with the final application review by HUD in Washington D.C. Although SAR was soon to be a political and environmental “hot issue”, but because very little was known about the project, AACOG members found virtually no one interested in opposing the development or questioning it’s impact on San Antonio or the environment. Staff reactions in Washington D.C. to the final application were mixed. SAR was referred to as a “retard” due to the loss of the UTSA site and was viewed as a mediocre project. CMH authored and presented an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) in Washington D.C. without any input from the City of San Antonio (City). Outraged by this unauthorized presentation, the City attempted to freeze the development.

Eventually the City council voted 6-3 to allow continuance as a result of extreme pressure locally and in Washington D.C.

On February 23, 1972, the Sierra Club, Citizens for a Better Environment, The League of Women Voters, and the American Association of University Women filed suit in U.S. District Court for an injunction to prevent SAR from accepting the HUD loan guarantee. Two days later, Bexar County joined the plaintiffs in the suit and finally, the Edwards Underground Water District joined the suit on March 14, 1972. Defending the suit were the SAR development team and HUD. Presiding Judge, Adrian A. Spears, ruled in favor of the defendants, but placed some restraints on the developers and wanted to be kept informed on the progress of the SAR.

In March 1973, CMH filed an application with the Texas Water Rights Commission (now Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) to establish a municipal utility district (MUD). By Texas Law, the MUD is a public entity with the legal authority to maintain water and sewer quality for it's operating area. They (MUDs) are subject to Texas statutes and require annual audits, notice of public meetings, elections, tax rates, and office locations. San Antonio Municipal Utility District No. 1 (District) was created in October 1974, following the completion of the lawsuit by the Sierra Club.

The preceding was extracted from a number of sources including a book from the San Antonio Public Library titled, The Politics of New Communities, by Wyatt T. Watterson.

The District is composed of five board members, which include the President and 4 Directors:

President:	Marjorie A. Godfrey
Vice President:	Robert L. Kuhn
Secretary/Treasurer:	Jason Fasone
Director:	David Francis
Director:	Scott Mather

The District's office is located at 16450 Wildlake Boulevard, Helotes, Texas 78023, and the board of directors meets in regular session on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m.