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REAL ESTATE / NEIGHBORHOODS

## Bringing the History In — Mixed-Use Developments Like San Antonio's Lone Star District Embrace the Past and the Landscape to be Memorable

A Game Plan for Building Districts That Become Community Staples

BY CHRIS BALDWIN // 05.13.21



1 *Lone Star District will open up a world of possibilities for a prime, long closed off San*  
 9 *Antonio site. Including the river.*

**E**very city has a few dream sites. Rare prime locations where history, nature and opportunity meet. Ones that should be special. Ones that deserve to be developed with the utmost care. In San Antonio, the old Lone Star Brewery site definitely qualifies on all fronts. The massive 32-acre site with historic buildings and the iconic white smokestack with Lone Star painted on its side in eye-catching red has long been closed off to the public.



Now, Midway and GrayStreet Partners are teaming up to bring a new mixed-use development to the site dubbed Lone Star District. There will be new restaurants, stores, entertainment options, apartment living and offices. But there will also be a reverence for the site's history, by utilizing some of the older historic buildings and that smokestack serving as a beacon to the district. The property's riverfront will also be activated like never before.

“A lot of times when people think about the San Antonio River, they think about downtown and all the concrete places,” says Larry Sloan, Midway's Executive Vice President of Investment & Development. “Reality is that the San Antonio River along this section is a much more natural amenity.

“It's an opportunity for us to take something that's extremely authentic and really build upon that.”

This is part of the future of mixed-use developments. At least ones done by companies that care about doing something meaningful, doing something real. You will never mistake Lone Star District for another mixed-use development. Authentic is more than a buzzword on a project like this. It is, in many ways, the thing that matters most

Midway is currently developing a mega project where that is the case in Houston as well. East River is 150 acres of former industrial land long closed off to Houstonians, a swath that's the equivalent of 65 city blocks. It's the largest site within the 610 Loop that is still open for redevelopment. In essence, Midway will be building a new mini city within the city. One that introduces a riverfront to Houston.

Yes, like Lone Star District in San Antonio, East River will open up and activate a previously closed-off swath of riverfront.

“These opportunities are hard to come by,” Sloan says.

Cities are starting to recognize that special mixed-use developments can be the best answer for rare sites, even historic sites. A mixed-use development does not have to be all about the new. It shouldn't be at sites like Lone Star District and East River, and Midway's leadership team has long fostered that truth.

“We want to embrace the history of the sites,” Sloan says. “We think of it in terms of a little bit of grit. Which is a good thing. Grit’s not a bad thing. Plus, having it be overly polished, I think would be a miss.

“It’s keeping natural elements in terms of the waterfront and how you do your landscaping.”



East River is going to almost be a city within a city, with a real waterfront in Houston.

You can expect kayaking on the river at both Lone Star District and East River — and at least some retail geared to those type of adventures. Right now, Midway is putting together the plans for the first phase of both potential city-changing projects. These Texas mixed-use pioneers — who are behind developments such as CITYCENTRE and Buffalo Heights District in Houston (among others), and Century Square in College Station — have found that this first phase is often the most crucial phase.

Lone Star District’s first phase will include at least 100,000 square feet of office space, 50,000 square feet of restaurants, shops and entertainment venues and 250 modern apartment homes.



“Fortunately, the truly historic buildings are tucked up to Lone Star Boulevard, which is the north end of the site, the beginning of phase one,” Sloan details. “We also have the ability to touch the river, to start to unpack the riverfront in phase one. That allows us to create a bigger vision early.

“It all starts with the nucleus. It’s about getting that right. And we’re able to create that with this first phase. And there will be multiple green spaces and ties to nature, too. I think it always starts with the first phase.”

## Lone Star District and East River’s Front Doors

Successful mixed-use developments — the ones that endure and become crucial parts of communities — tend to set the tone early. Midway takes a long term view on its projects. East River is projected to be a 20-year build from start to completion of its final phase. Lone Star District will be a 10-year-plus project. But both East River and Lone Star District will be recognized as vital centers long before their later phases if things go right.

Midway always has an overall masterplan for a development, but phase one of any of its districts gets obsessed over and carefully analyzed from every possible angle.

“We believe it’s critically important what the mix is within that first phase,” Sloan says. “Especially things like retail. Retail is a big piece of the experiential part of this placemaking. So what sort of retail you put in a project to begin with helps set the tone early too. In terms of what this project is going to be.

“We see it in a lot of our projects. In our East River project, we’re getting pretty far down the road with our merchandising plan and our actual tenants on the retail rail. And that really helps frame the office users and the other users in terms of what the package is going to be.”





Lone Star District is embracing the history of its setting.

If a mixed-use development is done right, that first phase should do more than wink at the history of the site. It should bring some of that in. At Lone Star District that history traces all the way back to 1933 when the Sabinas Brewing Company first built the original brewery. Before long, other attractions were added, including the Buckhorn Hall of Horns, a famous saloon turned Wild West wonderland. There was even a popular swimming pool and pond, and a biergarten for events and gatherings.

People got used to going to this area of the city and enjoying themselves. Until the brewery closed for good and everything stopped in 1996. Now, Midway and GrayStreet are eager to bring San Antonians back to the Southtown site that's easily connectable to Roosevelt Park across the river, as well as close proximity to the historic King William neighborhood.

“It’s about the water,” Sloan says. “It’s about the history of the site. Music has a big history on the site. So in some capacity, getting music back to this location certainly would be a win as well. There certainly could be some really interesting indoor music opportunities.”



It is also about embracing the current communities around Lone Star District and East River. Officials from the developers are already in touch with the Lone Star Neighborhood Association and Southtown Arts District on a number of things, including making sure local artists and local makers have a place in the new district. Midway's done a similar outreach at East River. It's put aside some smaller retail spots that are largely built out for local vendors from the 2nd and 5th Wards, the two Houston neighborhoods the project straddles.

If you want to create a sense of place, you have to respect what is already in place. Maybe, this is the future of mixed-use development too. At least in truly forward-thinking developments. It's about embracing the *memorable* — everything that helps set a truly distinctive site apart.

“Having that gravity to begin with helps,” Sloan says. “And the emotional connection and the tie to the community and visitors already helps as well.”

After all, it takes a community to create a truly memorable place.

***For much more on Midway and all its developments, check out its new, reimagined [District website](#).***

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# Houston's Own Little Slice of Paris in the Museum District — Inside an Estee Lauder Exec's Dreamy \$249,000 Space

Glamour Without the Luxury Price Tag

BY SHELBY HODGE // 05.10.21



1 *Antique-mirrored backsplashes, cabinetry in navy high-gloss lacquer, and countertops in*  
12 *Pietra gray marble add up to a unique kitchen in this condo at 1400 Hermann.*

**W**hen an Estée Lauder exec began planning the interiors for her pied-à-terre in hometown Houston, she was just back from an adventure in Paris. Romantic City of Lights influences danced in her head. So when the last crystal doorknobs were installed and the Moroccan-inspired millwork completed, every inch of her smashing condo at 1400 Hermann oozed with ooh la la.

Fast forward to today, the lady is bidding adieu to her jewel box of a residence.

The exec has tapped residential BFF real estate veteran, though youthful, [William Finnorn](#) of [Martha Turner Sotheby's International Realty](#) to handle the sale of the [16th floor](#), 938 square foot condo. Thanks to the owner's penchant for glamour, this is a luxe offering without the luxury price tag. The property is listed at \$249,000.



“My decor is Parisian glam with a Texas twist,” the exec tells *PaperCity*. “Blue lacquered cabinets with hand-antiqued mirror in the kitchen, gorgeous hues of marble throughout, and a stunning midnight teal master suite are among my favorite details in the jewel box that I call home, when visiting my beloved hometown.”

We would say that the galley-style kitchen is the show stopper with cabinetry in navy high-gloss lacquer, countertops in Pietra gray marble, backsplashes of antique mirror with floors of honed Calacatta marble and Vulcan in a custom stripe pattern. Plus, a terribly chic Liebherr refrigerator.

The jewel box of a condo at 1400 Hermann was designed by an Estée Lauder exec as a Houston pied-à-terre.

The bedroom is a piece of artwork in itself with walls painted in Sherwin-Williams Dark Knight and windows covered in velvet blackout drapes. Custom touches include the closet build-out and the ceiling millwork which is carried out in a Moroccan star-inspired pattern. The antique French chandelier completes the drama.





The bathroom features a custom vanity in high-gloss lavender lacquer and the shower in Milas Lilac honed marble.

“I love the use of color in my homes,” the owner says, “and was influenced by the gorgeous shades of blue in Paris, and the elegance of Parisian style.”

Decorative elements that further set this condo apart include crystal doorknobs, Circa Lighting fixtures, hardwood floors and metallic textured wall covering in the entry and dining area. And we would be amiss if we didn't mention the grand downtown skyline views.

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