

Housing Developers in San Antonio

Examining Trends by Race and Gender

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August 2024

The number of households in San Antonio grew by **18 percent** between 2010 and 2022, while the number of housing units in the city grew by **16 percent** during the same period.¹

From 2019 to 2023, **90 developers** in San Antonio built or obtained permits for multifamily housing projects to **add or rehabilitate 30,469 units**.²

Forty-nine percent of renter households in San Antonio are cost burdened, and **24 percent** are severely cost burdened.³

In San Antonio, there are only **70 affordable homes available for every 100 renter households** at 50 percent or below the area median income (Aurand et al. 2023).

San Antonio has been growing quickly. Although the city is adding multifamily units and housing is more affordable than in many other parts of the country, renters with low and moderate incomes are still underserved. Boosting housing development in San Antonio, particularly for families with low incomes, is critical—and this demands participation by all housing developers. But developers of color and female developers are severely under-represented and often sidelined by structural barriers such as access to industry networks and capital, stifling their potential to contribute to the housing stock and create wealth for themselves and their communities.

LARGE MULTIFAMILY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE

We identified 90 large multifamily development entities—defined as those building or redeveloping projects of at least 10 housing units—operating in San Antonio from 2019 to 2023. These entities have built or plan to collectively build or rehabilitate 30,469 units of multifamily housing.⁴ This represents a total investment of \$5.9 billion in terms of estimated total property valuations (assessed land value plus improvements), or an average of \$132,774 per unit built or rehabilitated.⁵

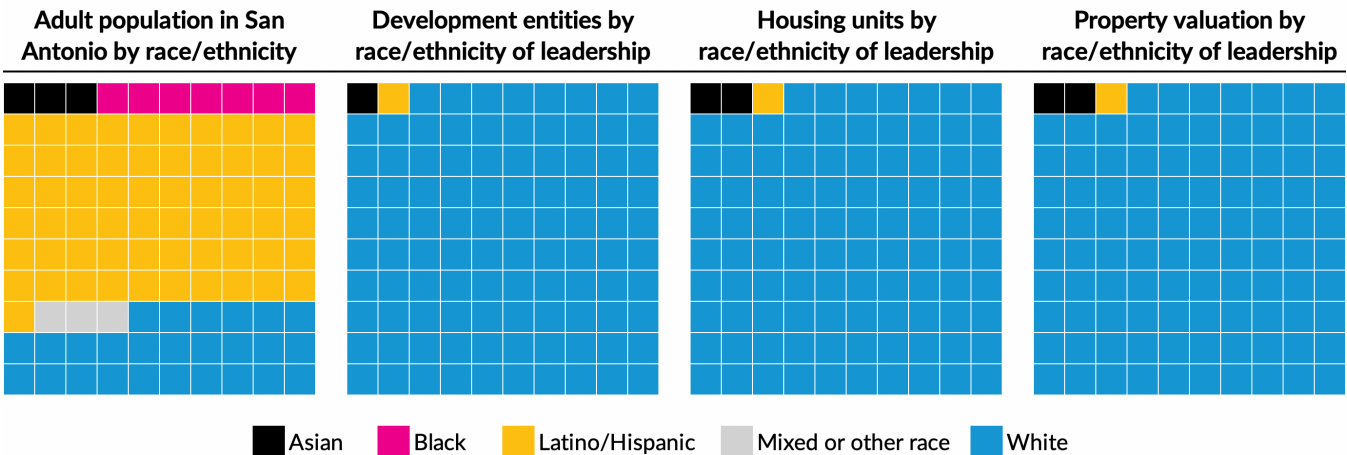
Of the multifamily development entities we were able to classify, 81 (96 percent) are for-profit organizations, which account for 99 percent of units and almost all property valuations. The remaining three entities are nonprofits. We classified 52 percent as national, 17 percent as regional, and 31 percent as regional in terms of their footprint.

MARKET PENETRATION OF LARGE MULTIFAMILY HOUSING DEVELOPERS OF COLOR

Three in every four adult San Antonians are people of color, and the vast majority of people of color are Latino. But among the 81 developers for which we were able to identify the race or ethnicity of leadership, only 2 are owned or managed by people of color (one is Asian led and the other is Latino led), as seen in figure 1. These for-profit firms accounted for almost 4 percent of units permitted and 2 percent of large multifamily property valuations (percentages may not align exactly with figure 1 due to rounding).

FIGURE 1

Share of Market Penetration by Large Multifamily Housing Developers of Color in San Antonio
For developers with built or permitted developments of 10 or more units, 2019–2023



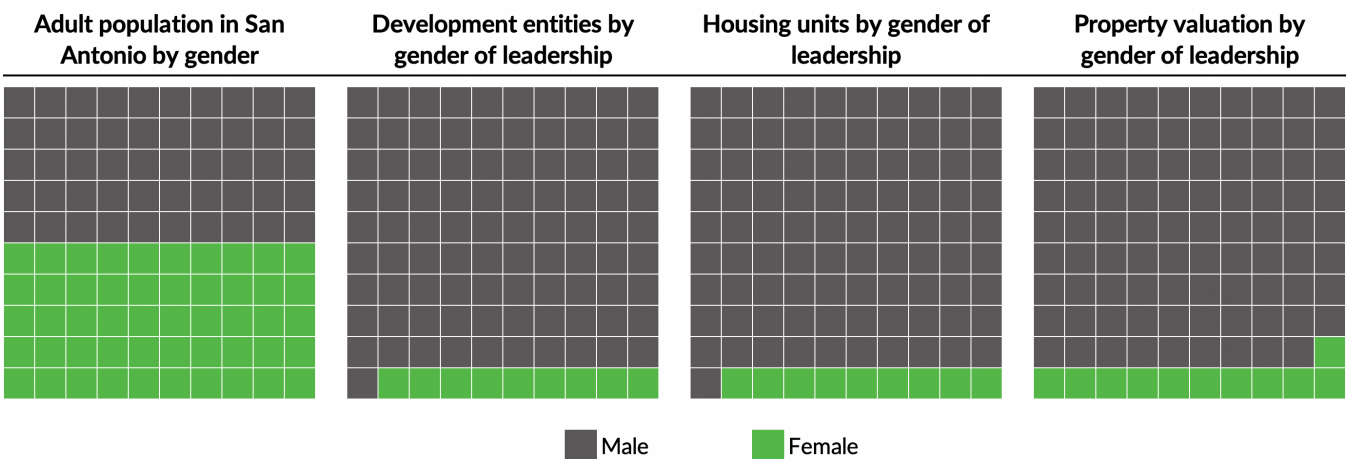
Source: Authors' calculations using the 2020 Decennial Census, San Antonio's building permit data for 2019–2023, and CoStar data for projects completed between 2019 and 2023.
Note: Each rectangle represents approximately 1 percent. Values of 0.5 and above were rounded up to the next percentage point. "Mixed or other race" includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, mixed race, and people identifying as other races.

MARKET PENETRATION OF WOMEN-LED LARGE MULTIFAMILY HOUSING DEVELOPERS

Inequities also exist along gender lines. Of the 82 entities for which we were able to identify the gender of leadership, only 7 (9 percent) were women led (figure 2), and only 1 of the women-led entities was a nonprofit. These entities account for 9 percent of all units permitted and 11 percent of large multifamily property valuations.

FIGURE 2

Share of Market Penetration by Female-Led Large Multifamily Housing Developers in San Antonio
For developers with built or permitted developments of 10 or more units, 2019–2023



Source: Authors' calculations using the 2020 Decennial Census, San Antonio's building permit data for 2019–2023, and CoStar data for projects completed between 2019 and 2023.
Note: Each rectangle represents 1 percent. Values of 0.5 and above were rounded up to the next percentage point.

ABOUT OUR METHODS

We studied public data on building permits in the city of San Antonio between the start of 2019 and end of 2023 and data from CoStar for projects in the city completed in the same time frame. We filtered these records to include only multifamily new construction or rehabilitation projects with at least 10 units (or the estimated equivalent in project costs). We then used publicly available sources and web searches to categorize each permit recipient or development entity according to the race or ethnicity and gender of its leadership. We also classified developers in terms of their operational footprint (local, regional, or national) and as either nonprofit or for-profit entities. We considered for-profit firms to be led by people of color or women if the CEO or at least half of the principals, founders, or owners are people of color or women. For nonprofits, we considered whether the CEO or at least half of the board members are people of color or women. We used web searches, observation, and name-based inference to categorize leadership by race or ethnicity and gender. Where possible, we vetted local lists with one or more knowledgeable local development partners or stakeholders.

STEPS FOR ACTION

San Antonio has among the worst representations of people of color in the multifamily housing development market.⁶ The city's low share of Latino housing developers is particularly striking, considering that this demographic makes up most of the adult population in San Antonio. To reduce inequities in the San Antonio real estate development sector, local government stakeholders may consider the following steps.

- Female developers and developers of color lead, on average, smaller and younger organizations with limited access to opportunities with government entities—the type of opportunities that could strengthen their track records and catalyze new project ventures. The city can take race-neutral steps to advance racial and gender equity, such as procurement reform and community engagement to increase procurement of disadvantaged developers and enforce anti-discrimination regulations (Theodos, McManus, and Rajninger 2024).
- Burdensome city regulations can often be cost- or time-prohibitive for smaller, younger development entities. Policymakers can also work to reduce bureaucratic barriers to entry for new, emerging, and locally based firms, which will help advance racial and gender equity.
- The city can lessen burdensome experience or bonding requirements for developers, ease approval processes, and make subsidized low-interest predevelopment loans and grants available. These steps can make a significant difference for emerging developers with less experience capitalizing projects.

NOTES

- ¹ 2022 and 2020 American Community Survey one-year estimates.
- ² Authors' analysis of "Permits Issued," City of San Antonio Open Data, <https://data.sanantonio.gov/dataset/building-permits/resource/c21106f9-3ef5-4f3a-8604-f992b4db7512>, and CoStar data.
- ³ 2022 American Community Survey five-year estimates. Cost-burdened households spend 30 percent or more of their incomes on housing, while severely cost-burdened households spend 50 percent or more.
- ⁴ This figure includes the number of projected units from permits issued between 2019 and 2023 and the number of units built over the same period.
- ⁵ We divided the property valuation for every project over the number of units and then obtained the average for all projects.
- ⁶ We analyzed 10 cities in total for this study. See "Diversifying Multifamily Housing Development," Urban Institute, <https://www.urban.org/projects/diversifying-multifamily-housing-development>.

REFERENCES

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This case study was funded by Wells Fargo. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission. We also thank Taidgh McClory, Arezo Azizi, and Teddy Maginn for their meaningful contributions to this study. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute's funding principles is available at urban.org/fundingprinciples. Copyright © August 2024. Urban Institute. Permission is granted for reproduction of this file, with attribution to the Urban Institute.