

Turning Public Space  
into Community Value

**VIA Villa**  
San Antonio | TX

## VIA Villa | Case Study



Cattleman Square neighborhood is a short distance from San Antonio's famed River Walk. For years, the neighborhood has been in a state of decay, dotted with vacant and dilapidated buildings.

The cornerstone of the neighborhood revitalization is VIA Metropolitan Transit Centro Plaza at VIA Villa. This state-of-the-art facility, opened in late 2015, serves the Greater San Antonio Region as a multi-modal transit hub to reduce traffic congestion into the downtown, improve the passenger experience and stimulate economic growth.

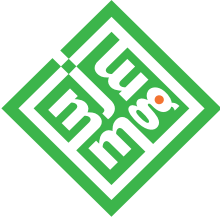
Centro Plaza is located next to the renewed historic International & Great Northern Rail Station and VIA's new Administration Headquarters called The Grand. Centro Plaza includes striking architectural, natural, artistic, and environmentally friendly features. A large circular canopy shades the plaza and includes an 80-foot light tower by renowned artist Bill FitzGibbons. Sustainability features reduce ozone emissions, use solar paneling to generate electricity, and water filtration systems. Some are calling Centro Plaza a "transformation hub."

MJMMG was hired to develop comprehensive activation strategy for Centro Plaza, a community room at the Grand, leased space and a location earmarked for food trucks to serve as a catalyst for the neighborhood's continued improvement.

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### Challenges

- Create recommendations to transform a new, but underutilized public area used primarily as a pass-through point into an active, safe and welcoming civic hub.
- Identify sustainable ways to activate the Plaza for people who live, work and use the area.
- Address issues of safety, homelessness, panhandling, and cleanliness.
- Integrate the needs of diverse interests—City agencies, law enforcement, businesses and residents and community organizations—into a plan they would support.



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## Services Delivered

- MJMMG developed a VIA Villa activation strategy to manage, market and operate all activities amid an underutilized area, with the goal of defining the best and highest use of VIA Villa for events and activities. Some of the elements of this process involved:
- Assessing VIA operations to define each department's contributions, role, and capabilities to staging events and activities at VIA Villa.
- Conducting site tours of VIA Villa and surrounding neighborhood to define community needs.
- Conducting interviews and focus groups with all stakeholders, such as local property and business owners; social service providers who work with the homeless; City public space managers; food providers; artist and performance groups and more.
- Evaluating current and potential future users.
- Conducting interviews and focus groups with all stakeholders, such as local property and business owners; social service providers who work with the homeless; City public space managers; food providers; artist and performance groups and more.
- Evaluating current and potential future users.
- Conducting research into national case studies to apply best practices and lesson learned to VIA Villa, including security requirements; emergency management planning; event/activity planning; transit and way finding; integration of short/long-term leasing; strategies to address homeless populations; and urban design.
- Using information collected to create metrics for benchmarks for activation.
- Collecting commercial data to determine leasing rates.

## Results

- The strategic plans provided by MJMMG are being used as the blueprint for accomplishing VIA Villa goal.

***“MJMMG understands what public space is all about and how it works.”***

Alexa Arena | Lendlease