

ANNUAL REPORT

A Year of Community Growth and Cultural Vitality.

2024





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A LETTER FROM DR. TOMEKA CROSS WILSON

Chair-Elect, SAGE

Dear Friends of SAGE,

As we close out 2024, I'm proud to reflect on a year of meaningful transition, renewed vision, and community celebration at San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside (SAGE).

First and foremost, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude to Bridgett White, who stepped in as Interim CEO and provided steady leadership during a pivotal time for our organization. Her thoughtful leadership laid a strong foundation for SAGE's next chapter.

In late January, we welcomed our new Chief Executive Officer, James Nortey. James brings deep legal and policy experience, a commitment to equity, and a passion for place-based economic development that aligns powerfully with SAGE's mission. Under his leadership, SAGE is already strengthening its relationships, expanding its programming, and sharpening its strategic focus.

We also continued to deepen our community roots through signature events like HalloEast—a beloved, family-friendly celebration that brought joy, safety, and connection to Eastside children and families. Events like HalloEast reflect SAGE's belief that community development must always honour the cultural vibrancy and resilience of our neighbourhoods.

In summer 2024, we were also thrilled to welcome Breyllann McCollum of Frost Bank to our Board of Directors. Breyllann brings fresh insights, a strong voice for the next generation of leaders, and a deep love for the Eastside.

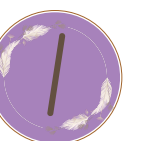
At the same time, we bid a fond farewell to three dedicated board members: Sandy Villaseñor, Father Kevin Fausz, and McKayla Sumbry. We thank them for their faithful service and the lasting impact they've made on this organisation and the community we serve.

As we look ahead, I remain excited about the bold vision SAGE is pursuing, rooted in equity, driven by collaboration, and inspired by the promise of our Eastside. Thank you for walking with us. We are excited for all that's ahead in 2025.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tomeka C. Wilson', written in a fluid, cursive style.

Dr. Tomeka C. Wilson
Chair, SAGE Board of Directors



MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



McKayla Sumbry
Past Board Chair
Spurs Sports & Entertainment



Father Kevin Fausz
Secretary
Holy Redeemer Catholic Church



Christopher Ray
Treasurer
Broadway Bank



KJ Feder
CPS Energy



Dr. Tomeka Wilson
St. Philip's College



Jane Macon
Bracewell LLP



Dr. Rhonda BeLue
University of Texas at
San Antonio



Breylann McCollum
Frost Bank



Bonnie Edler Prosser
VIA Metropolitan
Transit

A LETTER FROM JAMES NORTEY

Chief Executive Officer, SAGE

Dear Friends, Partners, and Neighbors,

It is a tremendous honor to share my first letter as Chief Executive Officer of San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside (SAGE). I stepped into this role with both deep gratitude and a profound sense of responsibility to our Eastside community, to our legacy of over 25 years of service, and to the future we are building together.

I would first like to thank the SAGE Board of Directors and the CEO Search Committee for placing their trust in me. Their diligence, vision, and commitment to the Eastside guided a thoughtful and inclusive hiring process that I was proud to be part of. I am especially grateful to those community members and stakeholders who offered their insights during this important leadership transition.

In my first few months, I committed to listening deeply and learning from those who know the Eastside best - its residents, business owners, faith leaders, and changemakers. From neighborhood association meetings to one-on-one conversations over coffee, I have been inspired by the stories, aspirations, and wisdom shared with me during our listening tour. I also consumed every economic study, community development plan, and strategic effort regarding the Eastside, ranging from the 2003 Arena District Eastside Community Plan to the SA Tomorrow Eastside Community Area Plan approved by the City Council. This journey culminated in our “Meet the CEO” community event in May, which welcomed over 100 neighbors to connect, ask questions, hear my vision for the organization, and share hopes for our Eastside.

2024 was a pivotal year for SAGE. SAGE faced significant changes in city funding, prompting us to reevaluate our financial strategies, seek new revenue streams, and sharpen our focus on high-impact, community-led initiatives. While difficult, these shifts reaffirmed our resilience and the strength of our relationships with funders, city leaders, and you, our neighbors.

One of the most significant milestones came in September, when SAGE was awarded a Community Economic Development Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - the organization’s first federal grant in over a decade. This \$150,000 investment will support the planning of a vibrant, community-centered public market complex right here on the Eastside, a project rooted in local ownership, cultural vitality, and economic opportunity.

Through it all, the heart of SAGE’s work remains unchanged: we exist to serve and strengthen the Eastside. The successes of 2024 would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, the guidance of our Board, the passion of our volunteers, and the trust of our community. Thank you for your continued partnership. I look forward to building an even stronger future together.

Gratefully,



James A. Nortey II



THE SAGE➡ MISSION

TO PROMOTE THE
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND
CULTURAL VITALITY
OF SAN ANTONIO'S
EASTSIDE.

OUR VISION

**WE ENVISION THE EASTSIDE AS BOTH
HOME AND DESTINATION - A
COMMUNITY OF OPPORTUNITY WHERE
EVERYONE CAN LIVE, WORK, WORSHIP,
AND PLAY.**

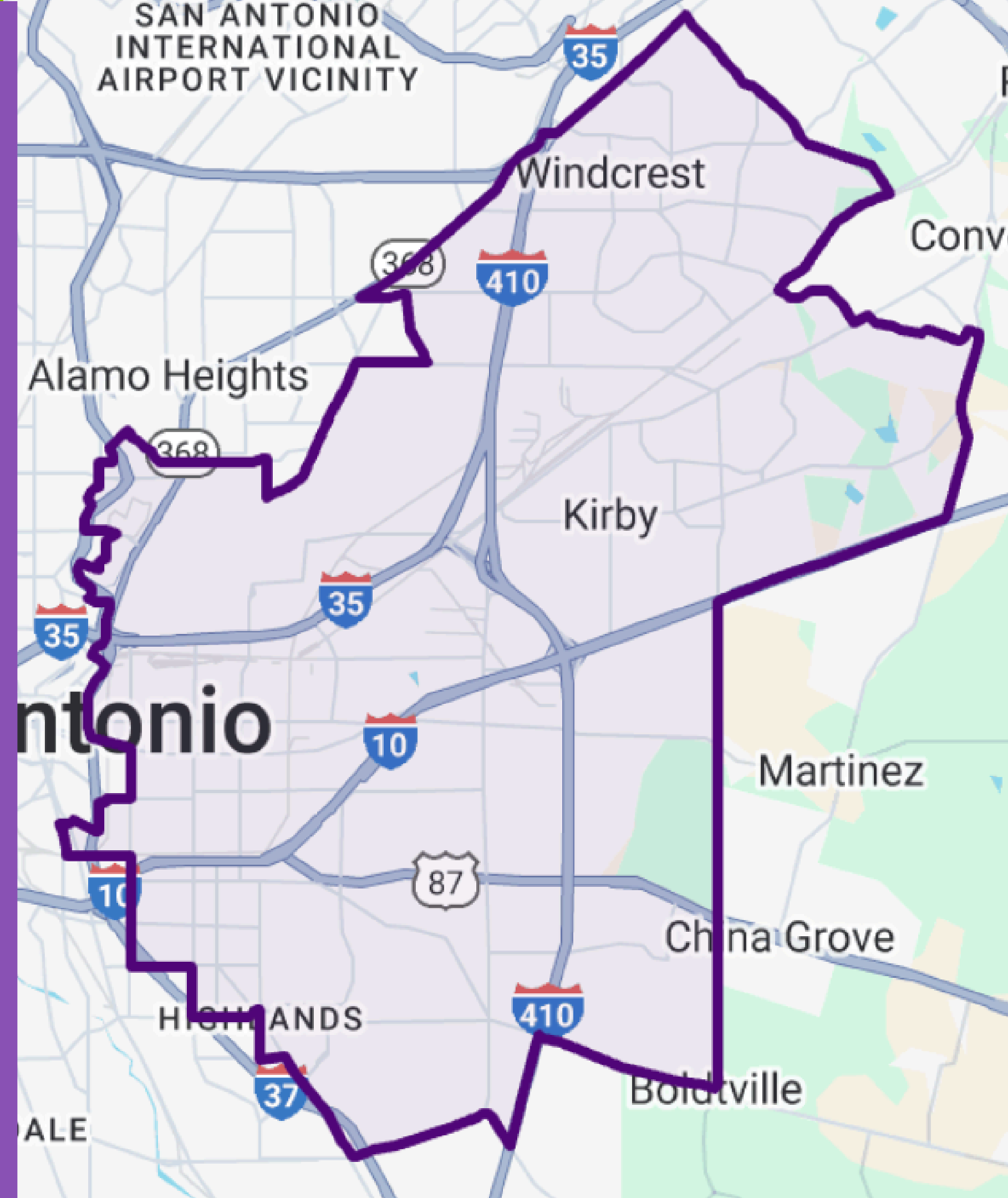
INTEGRITY, COMMUNITY, AND INCLUSION

OUR VALUES

OUR SERVICE AREA

San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside (SAGE) serves a vibrant and diverse set of neighborhoods on San Antonio's Eastside.

Find more about eastside businesses on an [interactive map](#) that highlights the Promise Zone boundaries along with key community resources, including clinics, parks, hospitals, and more.



OUR PROGRAMS

In 2024, SAGE continued to strengthen San Antonio’s Eastside through a diverse portfolio of programs. The Storefront Grant Program revitalized commercial spaces, creating new jobs and enhancing neighborhood appeal. Our Small Business Support Cohort equipped local entrepreneurs with mentorship, technical assistance, and peer networks, reaching over 100 businesses. We honored the community’s legacy through Cultural and Historical Markers, celebrating the stories and landmarks that define the Eastside.

Through Community Engagement events like HalloEast and mural unveilings, we fostered connection and pride, ensuring economic growth is rooted in cultural vitality. Together, these programs support Eastside resilience through entrepreneurship, investment, and heritage preservation.



STOREFRONT GRANT PROGRAM

SAGE operates two distinct Storefront Grant Programs, each designed to strengthen Eastside businesses through strategic investments in commercial property improvements. Together, these programs not only enhance the physical landscape but also support job creation, community pride, and long-term economic vitality.

Since 2010, the traditional **Storefront Grant Program** has awarded more than \$1.6 million to over 170 businesses across the full SAGE service area. These grants enable business owners to renovate, modernize, and enhance the curb appeal of their storefronts. Improvements have boosted customer traffic, preserved neighborhood character, and sustained the economic vibrancy of Eastside commercial corridors.

Focused within Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ #11), the **TIRZ Storefront Grant Program** has invested more than \$330,000 in 36 businesses over the past four years. These projects go beyond aesthetic upgrades—strengthening structures, improving functionality, and ensuring safety. Collectively, they have created 79 new jobs and impacted more than 219 total jobs, further positioning Eastside businesses for growth and resilience.



SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

COHORT PROGRAM

9

SAGE champions local entrepreneurship through its **Small Business Support (SBS) Program**, an initiative designed to strengthen the economic backbone of San Antonio's Eastside. In 2024, SAGE facilitated two successful cohorts, engaging 18 entrepreneurs across sectors such as hospitality, catering, wellness, and retail. The program reached more than 100 businesses throughout the year, steadily increasing participation each quarter and building lasting capacity among Eastside entrepreneurs for long-term economic resilience.



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL MARKERS

Since 2018, SAGE has planned and installed a series of **heritage plaques and murals** that celebrate the people, places, and stories that have shaped the East Side. These visual markers serve as powerful reminders of the neighborhood's rich cultural legacy and reinforce a shared sense of identity. Local schools and residents can engage with public history in a tangible way by walking through their own community's legacy.

Four new markers are currently in production as of 2024.

THE BEACON LIGHT LODGE HALL 1918

This two-story structure was the second building at this site to house the activities of the Beacon Light Hall Association, a fraternal organization chartered in 1909 by the Prince Hall Free Masons.

Free Masonry was organized in England as a secret society for men that initiated those chosen for membership into a brotherhood that featured signs, passwords, rituals and a hierarchy of stages or degrees that members attained as they gained greater understanding of the organization's purpose. The membership met regularly in a Lodge Hall.

Because of racial prejudice in the United States, Negroes could not join the white Masonic lodges so they formed their own.

The primary function of the brotherhood was to minister to the needs of members and their families; in particular, to assure that at death brothers in good standing received an appropriate funeral and burial.

The Lodge served other important functions in the community: it offered fellowship and benevolence in a socially and economically segregated community; it provided a sheltered environment where leadership and organizational skills could develop; it helped build bonds of unity.

Lodge meetings were held on the second floor of the building. From 1918-1922, a series of mortuaries owned by Williamson, and Carter & Sutton occupied the first floor. Over the years, a number of businesses occupied the downstairs level of the building, among them a tailor shop, a barber shop and a beauty parlor.

In 1969, the building was remodeled, with grey stucco applied to the wood frame siding.

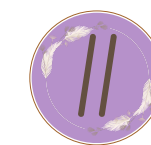
2003



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

From HalloEast's festive joy to vibrant mural unveilings and neighborhood celebrations, SAGE events bring energy and connection to the Eastside. In 2024, SAGE convened a series of community focus groups centered on post-COVID recovery and collaboration between East and West San Antonio, creating space for open dialogue and shared solutions. Each gathering, whether a festival, workshop, or community conversation, brought together residents, entrepreneurs, and partners to exchange ideas, build trust, and celebrate the collective spirit of the Eastside.

These shared experiences strengthen the social fabric that makes community-led change not only possible, but powerful.



MEET OUR CEO

James Nortey serves as Chief Executive Officer for San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside (SAGE). SAGE promotes the economic development and cultural vitality of San Antonio's Eastside. Specifically, SAGE supports small businesses, preserves Eastside cultural heritage, and guides growth. James previously worked as a trial lawyer with 12 years of experience litigating high-stakes commercial disputes on behalf of clients in federal and state courts as well as administrative agencies.

James is a proud son of Ghanaian immigrants and has lived all over the great state of Texas—born in Dallas, raised in El Paso, he sought his higher education in Waco before starting his legal career in Austin and continuing in Houston. He now lives in San Antonio with his partner, Sofia, and son James III.

James is a graduate of Harvard Law (J.D., 2011), the University of Texas (M.S., Technology Commercialization, 2015), and Baylor University (B.A., Philosophy, 2008).



MEET OUR STAFF



Fernando Garcia
Chief Financial Officer
FGarcia@sagesa.org



Lindsey Logan
Director of Programs & Partnerships
LLogan@sagesa.org



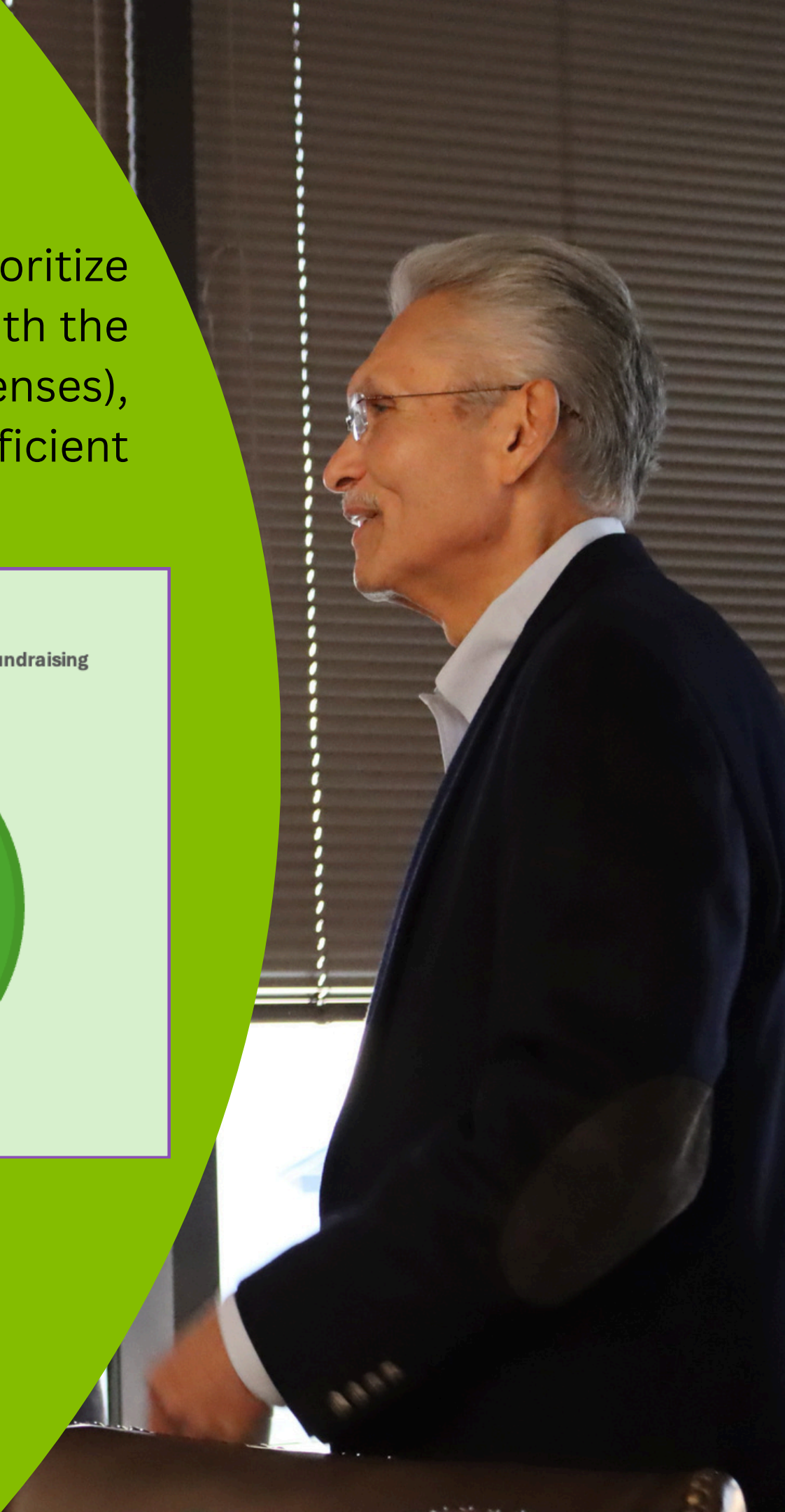
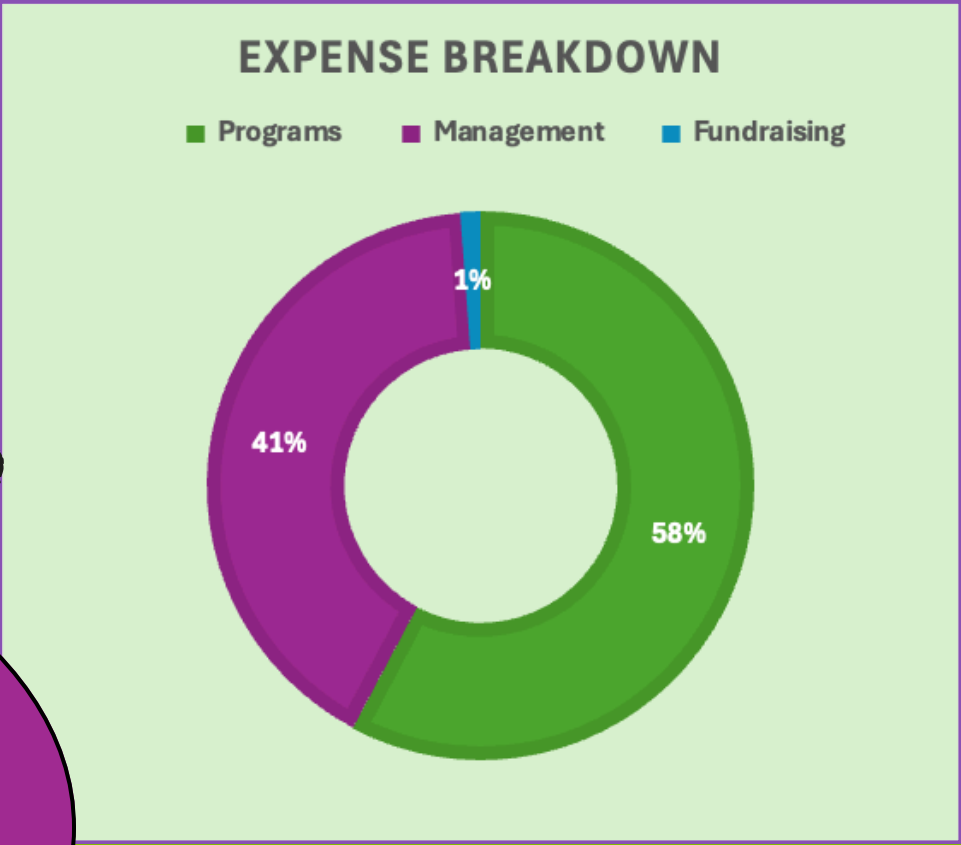
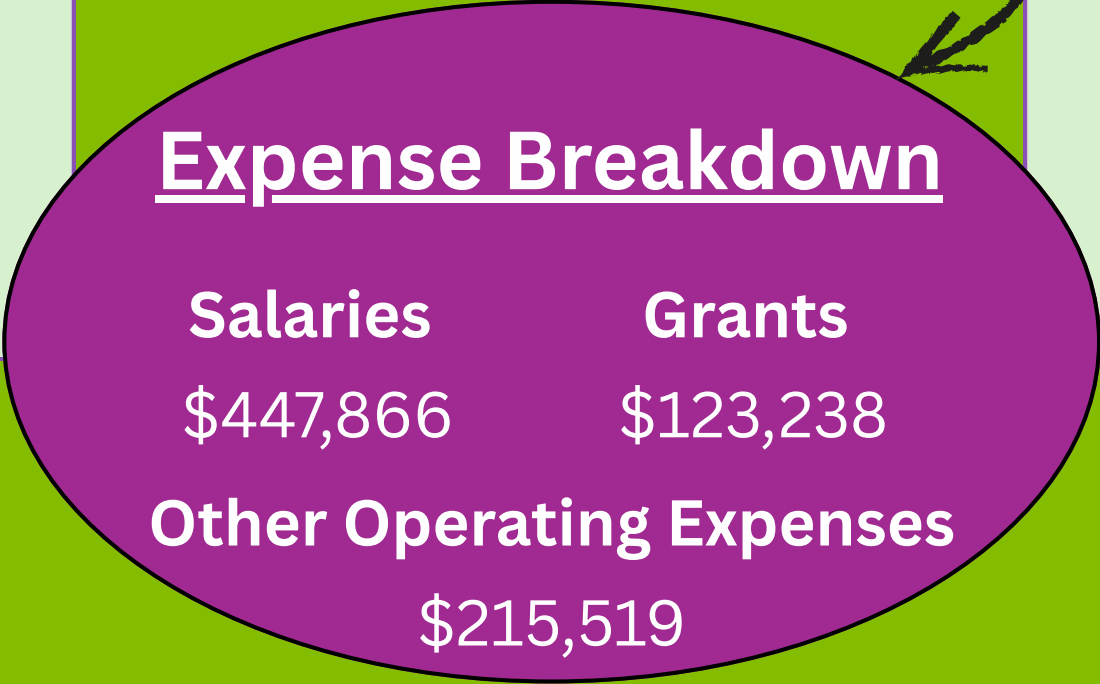
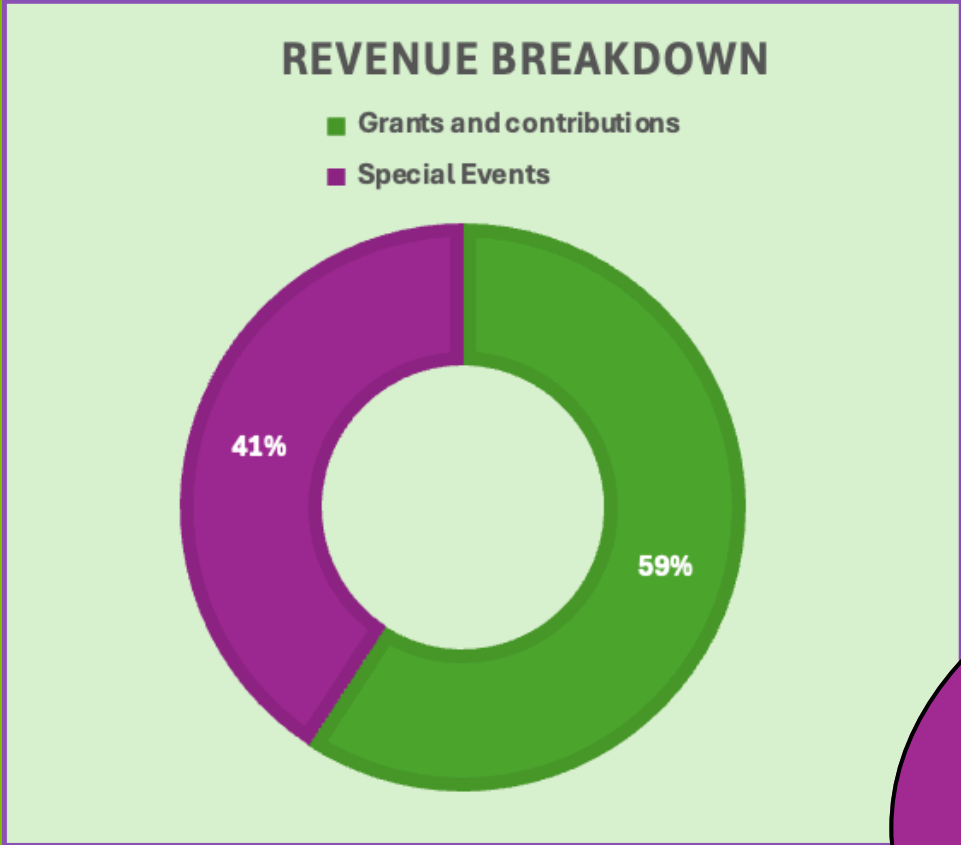
Shamari Leung
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Business Engagement Specialist
ERamirez@sagesa.org

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In 2024, SAGE maintained a strong and stable financial position while continuing to prioritize community impact. The majority of our revenue came from grants and contributions, with the remainder from special events. We invested heavily in programs (58% of total expenses), ensuring resources directly supported Eastside businesses, while maintaining efficient management and minimal fundraising costs.



HALLOEAST

Each October, SAGE hosts HalloEast, a free, family-friendly celebration that transforms the Eastside into a safe and spirited destination for trick-or-treaters. In 2024, the event welcomed over 400 children and families to enjoy candy stations, music, games, costumes, and community resources — all in a festive atmosphere that brings neighbors together. Featuring more than 40 vendors and local partners, HalloEast is more than just Halloween fun. It's a platform for small businesses, nonprofits, and service providers to connect with residents and strengthen community ties.



FOCUS GROUPS

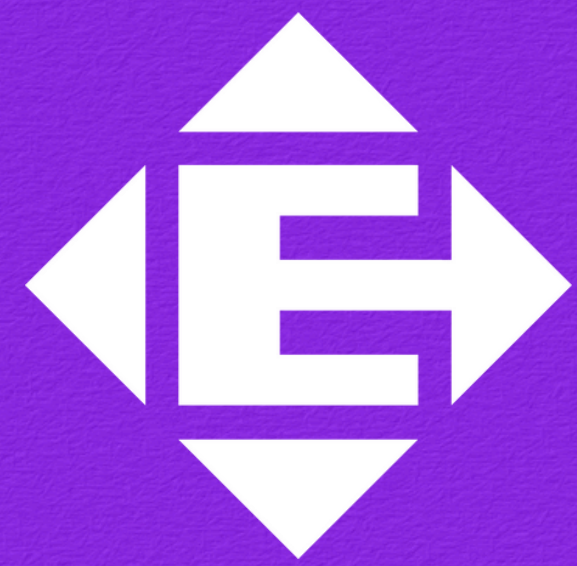
Each year, SAGE hosts community focus groups to hear from Eastside residents and workers about their experiences and aspirations. In 2024, participants shared reflections on the pandemic and offered ideas for future development to ensure it meets community priorities. These conversations are a vital platform for residents to shape planning, strengthen connections, and guide SAGE's efforts to support a thriving Eastside.



SAGE BY THE NUMBERS

2024 IMPACT SNAPSHOT

In 2024, SAGE made strides in targeted programming, community engagement and economic development.



17

FOCUS GROUPS

6

Community focus groups conducted

HALLOEAST

400+

Attendees, including children, families, and vendors

BUSINESSES SUPPORTED

100+

Eastside businesses served through technical assistance, grants, and training

SBS GRADUATIONS

6

Entrepreneurs who successfully graduated from the Small Business Support cohort

TIRZ GRANTS

\$330K

Closed in 2024, the Storefront Grant Program awarded \$330K to 36 Eastside businesses for improvements and revitalization.

MEDIA MENTIONS



East side nonprofit triples its service area as CEO seeks to rebuild from ‘chaos’ and financial strain

Source: [San Antonio Report](#)



After losing city Funding, SAGE gets its first federal grant in a decade

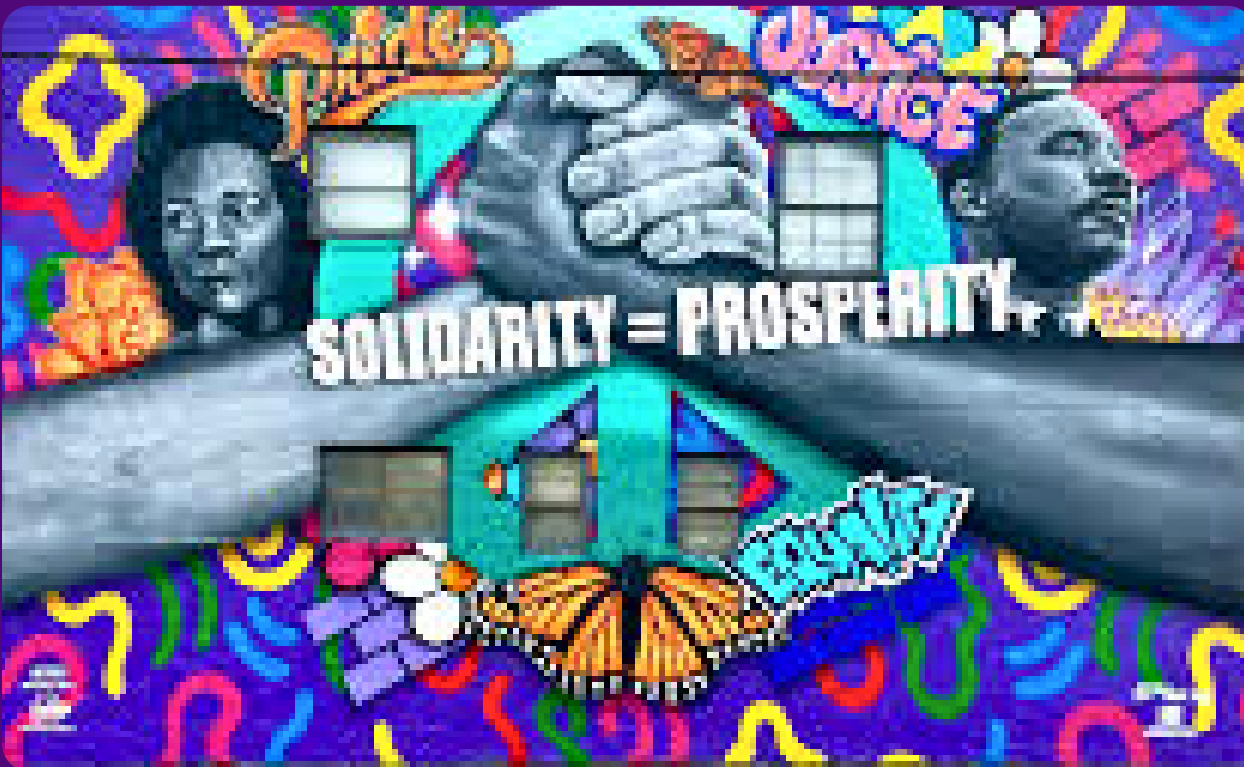
Source: [San Antonio Report](#)



Podcast: How new SAGE CEO James Nortey plans to lead an East Side renaissance

Source: [San Antonio Business Journal](#)

Find more about our media mentions on our [website](#).



RECOGNIZING OUR SPONSORS AND PARTNERS





SUBSCRIBE TO
OUR NEWSLETTER

DONATE TO
OUR MISSION



*Thank you for helping us build a
stronger Eastside.*

20



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