

## THE STORY GOES | BRIAN DILLARD | COSA CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER

**MOLLY:** (upbeat) Hey! It's Molly Cox and this is The Story Goes in San Antonio, Texas and it is a collaborative podcast between KLRN, your public television station and SA2020, a nonprofit that drives progress towards a shared vision of a thriving San Antonio. Together, we sat down and said, "Hey, let's tell a more complete story of San Antonio rather than headlines or taglines, let's try to see what we are *really* trying to do in San Antonio to reach our community vision *and* why not at the same time highlight some people and organizations who are sometimes quietly, sometimes loudly participating in that change, and um, so today we have Brian Dillard. And depending on who you talk to, (slight laugh) it could be quiet, it could be loud. (Both laugh) Oh, Brian is not only like a *major* community member and lives in our, and lives in Council District 2 and was like part of some fantastic work over there, you are also *now, officially* hired by the City of San Antonio. You are a *city employee. A public service agent.* (BOTH laughing) That's so weird. I want to talk a little bit about your journey to get to the City of San Antonio and like working there, but first, I wanna say because it's super fancy, Brian, um, Dillard is the Chief Innovation Officer, *CIO*, uh for the City of San Antonio. Uh, we are going to talk a little more about what innovation means as it relates to this job because innovation is sort of that catch all word. Yeah, right, it's like *everyone* is saying, "Yeah! Innovation!" It's resilience, it's equity. We just keep saying words and hope everyone will understand what it means. Um, how did you get to the City of San Antonio? I mean, like you could talk about how you got to the *actual* San Antonio, and then how you're working at the city. (1:52)

**BRIAN:** (talking calmly) Yeah, so I'm third generation Eastside San Antonio. I went off to the military for about ten years and got stationed back here decided to get out and stay in cyber security for a while, uh, for a private firm downtown. Um, while I was doing that me and my wife bought a house in Dignowity Hill, and uh renovated it for a few years back in 2013--

**MOLLY:** Mhmm (2:13)

**BRIAN:** (continues) um that's kind of when I got involved with the neighborhood association there. My wife worked for City Council, City Councilwoman for a while, uh so that plugged me in to City Council and City Hall and seeing how everything in the background worked. Uh, I mean I already had a degree in political science when I moved back to San Antonio. So, I had an interest in it. (tone lightens) I thought for a while, when I was younger that I wanted to run for office, but then I saw what that meant (MOLLY laughs) and thought *ahhhh I'm goodd.* (BOTH laugh)

**MOLLY:** (joking) I feel, I feel solid.

**BRIAN:** I'm okay, I'm okay. (MOLLY still laughing) I'll stay on the low level.



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**MOLLY:** Right!

**BRIAN:** Um, so yeah I jumped into the neighborhood association mix, um, trying to make an impact on the community that I came from--

**MOLLY:** Yeah!

**BRIAN:** (continues) Um, turns out I was a gentrifier when I came back because I had a higher salary, um I was demanding more amenities for my neighborhood, um I was demanding new sidewalks, um new infrastructure, so um it was an interesting dynamic to be from that neighborhood and come back and be considered a gentrifier. So me trying to figure out the dynamics and balance of that, um so I did that for about three years, um and then um after that I joined the City of San Antonio. (3:20)

**MOLLY:** Were you, its uh, I find it so interesting too that you were like in the military, you were in private, the private sector doing cyber security, um you're sort of dipping your toe in neighborhood associations and neighborhood development, etc. and then you now work at the City of San Antonio in, I, I feel like I'm okay with saying, we never think government and innovation at the same time, right? So the fact that the City of San Antonio has an Office of Innovation or a Chief Innovation Officer, automatically becomes sort of a (mimics Scooby-Doo questioning bark noise) like a Scooby Doo (makes noise again), so I'm curious, right, were you always, when you were growing up interested in like tech and cyber security and that kind of thing? (4:03)

**BRIAN:** No--

**MOLLY:** Did the military move you that way?

**BRIAN:** Yeah, the military definitely drew me in to tech a little bit further than I ever thought I would go--

**MOLLY:** Okay.

**BRIAN:** (continues) Um, but at the end of my military career I knew I didn't want to stay in cyber security. Actually, in 2012, when I got out, I applied for like ten jobs at the City of San Antonio and they didn't hire me (laughs) (4:21)

**MOLLY:** Ohh, okay (BOTH laughing) You're like, "hey, remember that time you didn't hire me and now I'm the Chief Innovation Officer, *whatever.*" (BRIAN laughs) I guess my question to you then right is, San Antonio itself is sort of becoming this tech booming city, right. We know that we are number two in cyber security in the United States, just behind (chuckles) Washington,



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DC, which is, we want to be *behind* Washington DC, we don't want to be *ahead* of Washington DC (BOTH laughing). Um, we also know that from tech jobs, etc we also know we are producing *like 1 person for every 10 IT jobs* that are available *right now* means we are having sort of a weird dynamic of needing to recruit people from out of town while also balancing how are we building up our own homegrown workforce. Um, I realize that your innovation office at the City of San Antonio, and I wanna get into sort of what it does do, isn't an economic development or workforce department for the city, and *yet*, it is because of the work that you're doing, this sort of ripple effect. Can you just talk more specifically, not only about like working with our tech industry as its starting to grow, but also, I mean I just keeping think about all of the things occurring in San Antonio, this Data school at the University of Texas at San Antonio *downtown*, the fact that we are seeing such a push for these *high demand* jobs in our industries, and tech seems to be one of them. It only makes sense then, that the City of San Antonio, our local government would say "Oh, we need to put a stake in the ground on innovation and tech." Is that sort of where the Office of Innovation comes from? (5:56)

**BRIAN:** Um, a little bit, um but no. (laughs)

**MOLLY:** (laughs) Okay, great, so then I know nothing. Help me

**BRIAN:** We are there now, we are definitely there with breaking down silos--

**MOLLY:** Okay

**BRIAN:** (continues) within the City of San Antonio departmentally--

**MOLLY:** (interrupts) *Wait a minute!* (sarcastically) There's silos in the City of San Antonio?

**BRIAN:** (laughs) And there not like you know, intentional silos like I don't want to work with them--

**MOLLY:** No, of course

**BRIAN:** (continues) But everyone has their line of business, everybody has *their* priorities--

**MOLLY:** We see it everywhere

**BRIAN:** Yeah! And you know, I mean city government is very streamlined and slim so--

**MOLLY:** Yeah



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**BRIAN:** (continues) Uh, we have to figure out how to get our jobs done, and that's kind of the end of the day--

**MOLLY:** That's right

**BRIAN:** Um, from the innovation stand point, um we are trying really hard to breakdown those silos and see how we can work in this ecosystem together. So also, outside the City of San Antonio, we are trying to work with our partners a lot closer. So we have CivTech program with Geekdom, which is tremendous. We are growing our partnership with TechBloc quite a bit. But also, with the SmartSA partners, so that's all the municipal agencies like CPS, SAWS, River Authority, VIA, um, UTSA, I mean we are growing that very quickly, we actually just met up with SWRI today to see how we could partner with them--

**MOLLY:** Okay [\(6:59\)](#)

**BRIAN:** We are constantly trying to get that outreach that we are here to work with others. Um, and I think that's something the City of San Antonio's *wanted* to do for a while, um but they're taking a step out there to make sure that our focus is about serving our customers, our communities, our constituents, um but at the end of the day, we know that we gotta change up how we do that in order to make it impactful. [\(7:18\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Is that what the Office of Innovation is sort of charged with? Like how do we make our service delivery, I, we talk about it all the time, the City of San Antonio's mission statement, the fact that I have it memorized is ridiculous, but it's just cause I'm a nerd (BRIAN laughs), um is uh "We deliver quality services toward a vision of prosperity for our diverse and historic community." And I'm always, I realize that I am biased right, as the person that works at SA2020, it's also so profound then that in the City of San Antonio, our community *wrote* what the vision of prosperity should be. So, how amazing it is, that our local government sort of has its, quote on quote, marching orders from the community it serves. So is the Office of Innovation's job sort of to make the delivery of those services better? [\(8:05\)](#)

**BRIAN:** Yes--

**MOLLY:** Okay.

**BRIAN:** (continues) So we do have three different teams right now. One of them is kinda tentative right now, we are building that. But the first one, the one we really started off of back in 2007, we were in the Office of Budget--

**MOLLY:** Okay



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**BRIAN:** (continues) And we were the Innovation and Reform Team--



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**MOLLY:** Oh my goodness, well I also love that you're in the budget office, right. So we are gonna *innovate budget!* (BOTH laugh) We are gonna innovate dollars!

**BRIAN:** And so we were challenged by you know, City Managers to go through our in department directors and go into departments, whenever they would identify a process was inefficient or ineffective, we would assess and then provide a recommendation. We did that for a long time. That was our bread and butter, and it still is you know to this day--

**MOLLY:** So like fixing and making processes more efficient? (8:50)

**BRIAN:** Right. And we are trying to pivot that into what we are trying to call "Innovation Academy" potentially--

**MOLLY:** Okay

**BRIAN:** Um, so what we are trying to do is like we have the capacity to take on *ten* items on our work plan every fiscal year--

**MOLLY:** Okay

**BRIAN:** (continues) And do that. What we are trying to do instead of fishing for people we want those departments to be able to fish for themselves--

**MOLLY:** Alright

**BRIAN:** Um, so we are training them on Lean Six Sigma, on Work Flow Analysis, so that way they can do the work. We are still there as consultants--

**MOLLY:** Sure--

**BRIAN:** At the top level--

**MOLLY:** Yeah

**BRIAN:** But now we get to expand, (talking quickly) I mean out of the 40 departments, we could have 40 projects going on instead of *just 10*.

**MOLLY:** Right

**BRIAN:** Also, the value that adds having a subject matter expert in that department working on it is invaluable. (9:27)



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**MOLLY:** And when you talk about processes, we are talking about like “hey um I’m having trouble paying for my SAWS bill, or my CPS bill, and I’m going to call the Department of Human Services. Hey, how does the Department of Human Services process through that?”

**BRIAN:** Exactly

**MOLLY:** Okay, got it. So that’s number one, what is next?

**BRIAN:** So the uh, the other one that is in place is our Smart Cities program.

**MOLLY:** Explain that to me, cause every time that I hear that I’m like (upbeat tone) “We are all going to get smarter!” (BOTH laughing) We are so smart!

**BRIAN:** So it’s really about utilizing technology and data to improve, to create a higher quality of life for our citizens. And that does not mean I need every citizen to have a smart phone in their hand, I don’t need my seniors to know how to work a computer, I mean that’d be great--

**MOLLY:** Right, right

**BRIAN:** (continues) But that’s not the end all, be all. So what we have done with this over the past, uh, 10 months is create these challenges that are based on proto- personas that are represented by demographics in our three innovation zones which are Brooks, downtown and the Medical Center. And those were designated by City Council last year. (10:26)

**MOLLY:** Okay

**BRIAN:** (continues) Um so these challenges, we developed them cause we didn’t want to take some shiny piece of technology and just implement it because it’s cool.

**MOLLY:** Right

**BRIAN:** We didn’t want to go off what another city was doing and say “Oh, that’s cool, let’s do it!” We wanted to make sure what we were implementing was impacting our most disadvantaged, our most underserved, also you know those who are fairly well off. We wanted to make sure we were looking through the lens of equity. We were determined to look through our Mayor and Council uh throughout this process. And that’s something that a lot of other cities are looking at us and saying “Oh.. that’s pretty cool.” I always say that, people say that San Antonio is behind the curve and there is a gift to that because we get to look at other cities and say “Let’s do it a different way.” (11:07)



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**MOLLY:** Right, they don't get to do it the way it potentially could have been done. You just used the word equity, and I know, I know we joked about it earlier, that idea of "innovation, equity, and resilience," we are like tossing these words out left and right, and what would it look like if we all had the *same* definition. I guess the City of San Antonio through the Office of Equity a few years ago worked with community members, uh and uh developed, and looked nationwide to sort of see what's the definition of equity? And the one that has been used most frequently at the City, that we at SA2020 also adopted because we were like "Hey, what if we were *all* saying the same definition" really is about um really focusing our resources and our time and energy towards people's needs, basically understanding histories and challenges and needs, and then fixing, moving our resources, to help in that space. So when you talk about "Hey, we didn't just stick a shiny object, new technology, because we wanted to, we used sort of very specific, we are looking at what are the needs of this community and then attaching resources to that to see if we can make *lives better*? That's like very right in line with what the city has said, at least externally, every time we hear the phrase "equity lens," "we are advancing equity," that's very specific to you. [\(12:19\)](#)

**BRIAN:** And I was, I was a co-chair on the last bond package on parks and rec and that was an amazing thing to see, it was that lens of equity we were going through every time. And it was like, "which communities have been underserved and neglected for the longest time?" And I come from one of those communities. So it was really exciting to be a part of that then and it's way more exciting to be a part of it now.

**MOLLY:** When you talk about sort of uh the innovation zones, it was Brooks, Downtown, and the Medical Center, obviously we have got three separate areas of our community, three sort of separate histories and challenges and needs, um are you looking at three different types of, are you taking on one project per fiscal year, are you taking on fifty-five projects? How is that working? [\(13:02\)](#)

**BRIAN:** No, 1-55.

**MOLLY:** Okay. (BRIAN laughs) You're like "we do 155."

**BRIAN:** Um, so we are really focusing on our capacity as we move forward. And um, let me clarify, um 6-7 months ago that was the first time the City hired someone with Smart City in their title, so we are like really kicking off this program from the base floor--

**MOLLY:** Okay, got it. [\(13:24\)](#)

**BRIAN:** Um, but we really have three areas of focus when it comes to those three innovation zones and Smart Cities in general, and its access to services, so like it's all in that digital divide item that we always talk about, that's one that we can reach outside of the innovation zones



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because we have a lot of partners that already doing that, and we want to make sure that we are working with them, so we don't duplicate efforts.

**MOLLY:** And when you talk about access to services, is it only via digital or is it like access to services meaning, how would we make streets more accessible, etc?

**BRIAN:** So our second focus area is mobility.

**MOLLY:** *A-ha! Okay, got it!* (BRIAN laughs) [\(13:54\)](#)

**BRIAN:** But access to services is also access to government. We want to make it easier for people to access government and utilize what is at stake there. And that goes for, as I mentioned, Smart SA and our Smart Cities program is actually a partnership. So we wanna make it easier, so if somebody calls the City of San Antonio or 311 and says my power is out, that 311 operator doesn't tell you to go call CPS, there's a seamless connection there that directs you right over--

**MOLLY:** Yeah, makes perfect sense.

**BRIAN:** (continues) We want to figure out how we implement that. So our second focus area is mobility. Last mile, first mile, sidewalks all that good stuff, and remember this isn't *only* about technology, this is about finding innovative ways to approach these measures. And the last one is sustainability: air quality, water quality, energy efficiency, all that good stuff. [\(14:36\)](#)

**MOLLY:** I appreciate sort of this, one: the fact that our job at SA2020 is to do sort of a bird's eye view. Mobility has been a challenge in our community for many, many years and now that we know our city is growing exponentially, and I always like to remind everybody that when we say growing exponentially, when we are going to double our population, it doesn't mean another 1 million people are going to be moving here from out of town, it means that babies are going to be born, and people are right, it means both, specifically raising sort of the red flags that "Hey, we are sort of having challenges and access to parks and green space, our first mile and our last mile, our complete streets," and then um what is the piece that the city can sort of take and then what are the partnerships they are creating? So I appreciate this sort of idea that a Smart City, this sort of Smart City program, can't be implemented by the City alone, or by the 1 person you hired back 7 months ago with Smart City. (laughs) [\(15:34\)](#)

**BRIAN:** Yeah, no absolutely not. No, we know we can't do it alone. I say we work with quite a few different teams. My team, within the Office of Innovation is very tremendously impactful for me, personally. Um, but we also work with our partners. And first of all, funding is slim with City government--



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**MOLLY:** (fake shocked) What!

**BRIAN:** (jokes back) Yeah, I know.

**MOLLY:** (sarcastically) It's a giant budget! You have so much money! Why can't you just spend it all? (BRIAN laughs)

**BRIAN:** So we have to share the wealth and we also share the benefits. There are some energy efficiency items that we want to implement through Smart Cities that CPS may already be doing or they've wanted to do and now they have a partner in that fight. When it comes to VIA, it's the, they get to work with us and we work with them on Smart City approaches. (16:10)

**MOLLY:** Yeah, it kind of becomes a continuum of care. Like hey this is where we stop, and you pick up. Um, the idea, I want to sort of give you the phrase we hear a lot, particularly as it pertains to government, um but also just the nonprofit sector generally. This idea of infinite resources and finite need. Um... wait... swap that!--

**BRIAN:** (laughs) I got you.

**MOLLY:** (continues) Infinite need.. wait (BRIAN laughs)... Infinite need, finite resources, there we go! (BRIAN still laughing) At some point, I'll have enough coffee that I can host this in a real way. Um, and we are always sort of struck by that because we know very clearly, if we are paying attention to where we want to go as a community and what the data is telling us, right? What are we seeing as far as indicators are concerned? And where the need actually is? So that if we are focusing our resources in the areas of need then it becomes very specific to moving the needle on our community vision. When you talk about, sort of, your office, and the Office of Innovation and making things move more efficiently and effectively within in the City of San Antonio feels also very obviously, to me at least, that if we are making government function more efficiently and effectively, we are better able to use our dollars to impact need, right? Do you, the innovation zones that you're talking about and then, this, the three sort of areas that you are really focused on, have y'all implemented anything in these innovation zones around these things that somebody may have heard about or like maybe a sentence was written that was like "Oh, hey! I think I know what you're talking about."

**BRIAN:** I think there have been pieces of items that have been implemented already that we tap into, yes. (17:46)

**MOLLY:** Okay

**BRIAN:** So one of them is SA Trip, which is something TCI implemented through Smart Cities funding. Um and it's basically a traffic management system. So they're slowly upgrading that to



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build on it, and we will be utilizing that system as we build farther out. But another one is the digital kiosks you see downtown and around the missions and some of the parks.

**MOLLY:** Am I right in saying that I saw somewhere that's like up for an award, too, your digital kiosks?

**BRIAN:** It was, yes. We were a finalist for an IDC award.

**MOLLY:** (excited) What! What's IDC?

**BRIAN:** Uhhh, I forget. (18:16)

**MOLLY:** Inner- something, IDC, it's important! It was an important award.

**BRIAN:** I know, I know. We were just speaking to them yesterday, too.

**MOLLY:** (quick mumbling) It's fine, it's fine. Sorry, I asked it. (BRIAN laughing) We can edit that out in post. There's no post. Um..

**BRIAN:** (laughing) It's fine.

**MOLLY:** The, uh, digital kiosks, explain that a little bit. Where are they located? Just in those innovation zones?

**BRIAN:** No, no, they are not just in the innovation zones, but they are in the innovation zones.

**MOLLY:** They are also there, okay

**BRIAN:** We also have them at 2 of the missions. We have 30 in total being installed. I think we have about 19 installed, many of them are downtown. Uh, but basically they are for wayfinding and they have a geo- proximity feature on them, and so basically within two miles it'll indicate what's the closest, so it is almost like Yelp on your phone, where you try to do my current location--

**MOLLY:** So if I want a restaurant or if I want a bus station, whatever, it's all right there on this digital kiosk. Okay. (19:06)

**BRIAN:** Then, also we get air quality and temperature monitoring off of them, so there is some sustainability items that these kiosks are already providing inside them, too.



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**MOLLY:** So I appreciate, my brain just went POOF, for just a second, that's why I took a momentary pause. I, listen, I am a doctor of technology, right, I've sort of had to be, right, uh coming up through elementary school into high school it was sort of coming out, right, I got my first cellphone at 19, it was a flip phone, I still have that same number, so shoutout to anyone who has my number at 19, it's still the same. (BRIAN laughs) Um, but now, you *have to know* technology, and we have such a digital divide in San Antonio, not just in what is available to a person in their own home, right, it's like one in six people don't have a computer in their home, and it's like 1 in 5 don't have internet, when we talk about sort of Smart Cities and digital work and getting people connected to technology, I realize that we can't solve this by sticking a smartphone in everyone's hands, what do we do? What are the innovative ways in which we can make this happen? [\(20:16\)](#)

**BRIAN:** So we look at it, with um three legs of the stool I think somebody said one time, nah I don't wanna do that. So one is infrastructure. Do you have access to broadband infrastructure wise within your neighborhood or your community?

**MOLLY:** Are there lines *there* that you can actually plug into? [\(20:30\)](#)

**BRIAN:** Yep, the second one is access to devices. Can you afford to get, own a device?

**MOLLY:** Okay

**BRIAN:** So, laptops, smart phones, whatever--

**MOLLY:** Sure

**BRIAN:** And then the third is knowledge, yes, knowledge of use. If I throw somebody wifi access and then a smart phone, do they know what to do with it? Are they going to be able to utilize it for what they *need*?

**MOLLY:** Right, um if they are five years old, yes. Cause if you stick an iPad in a kids hand they'll be like, "Lemme show you how to hack Rackspace." (BOTH laugh) And I'm like, how did you do that with an iPad? [\(21:00\)](#)

**BRIAN:** So that's our first step in that digital divide to that access of services. We are working with UTSA right now, uh along with SAHA because they've been doing digital divide work for a while. We are working with them tandem in order to do a digital divide assessment. We haven't really done an assessment on what that digital divide looks like in San Antonio proper. We get the census report kinda thing, but we are going to hit the ground running and one of the first steps into that is to inventory what we already have. There has been many entities who have done this inventory before, but they are all over the place and in those silos. And so I feel like



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our team has taken it on to say, “Let’s join all this together and see what the base line is before we start trying to address the solutions.

**MOLLY:** You’re basically saying let’s asset map. Let’s draw who has potential access to, is that sort of where you are going? Okay, and then, again, I realize that the City of San Antonio sort of with your team is really taking the lead on this, but I’m assuming like with *multiple* partners? [\(21:55\)](#)

**BRIAN:** Yes, we work with DHS, Metro Health, and everybody else.

**MOLLY:** Right, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas and--

**BRIAN:** (laughs) Jordana Barton is *great*.

MOLLY: Every time that I think about Jordana Barton, who is like *the* digital person, she’s on our board at SA2020, and um, I, every time that I see her name, particularly like spaces where people are interested in tech or digital anything, their eyes light up and they’re like (deepens voice) “But, Jordana Barton” (BOTH laughing) and I’m like I know, she’s like a legend.

**BRIAN:** She definitely is, yeah [\(22:25\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Right, so I, what’s next, we got fiscal, we know the city is in a runoff now, I’m not gonna talk about, or will be in a runoff potentially when this podcast airs, we may already selected our Council and Mayor, um and then they come in and say “Now, let’s set the priorities for the budget.” We know that there is a 5 year forecast on the budget for the City of San Antonio, that could very well see us losing *millions* of dollars due to State and Federal changes. Um, what happens to Office of Innovation, again we go back to sort of “infinite need, finite resources,” but what happens as the budget gets crafted, how does the Office of Innovation sort of set priorities for the next several years? [\(23:12\)](#)

**BRIAN:** Our mission stays the same. Our mission stays the same. We may have to shift around in capacity of what we do and how we do it. We will definitely have to explore available grants out there, but that’s also an opportunity for us to explore partnerships outside the City of San Antonio. Um, I tell my team, you know they’re concerned about budget, and I tell them, we are still going to do the work, that’s our job.

**MOLLY:** Right, we are going to figure it out.

**BRIAN:** We are gonna do the work, and we are going to have a great time doing it, and we are going to make an impact, and we are going to do it with our community. Um, that’s all we can do.



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**MOLLY:** Right, and you're the Office of Innovation, you can innovate dollars!

**BRIAN:** Exactly

**MOLLY:** Obviously. (BRIAN laughs) Um, I am curious because you're new-ish to the City, um you're new-ish to public service and the bureaucracy of working in the City. And I'm gonna tread lightly, cause also I know you're in the City and I know there are questions you can not answer, (jokingly) it's fine (BRIAN laughs), but I'm curious, as a guy who came from the military, *heavy* bureaucracy, right, very hierarchal, into the corporate sector, right, into neighborhood development, and now into the City, what is, uh, your own personal experience being in this sort of space? Like, do you find there are ways to maneuver around it? Is it good that you are a non-lifetime bureaucrat? [\(24:31\)](#)

**BRIAN:** Uh, yes, I do like that my team is, out of the seven people in my office, 2 of us have been there longer than 7 months. Okay, got it. It's good to have that fresh perspective and the City is really good about embracing that. Of course, there was some hesitation coming in because I thought I was going into a bureaucracy, and I knew City Managers and I knew how they worked, and they were great and exactly what I expected. It was terrific, I uh, I'm enjoying the job and my team is being allowed to do their work, um, there's trust and faith there, and it's in our core values, team work, and I see that day to day. If you can't witness anywhere else the amount of team work by the City of San Antonio, stop by the Migrant Resource Center.

**MOLLY:** (heartfelt) Uh that, have you been I'm assuming?

**BRIAN:** Yeah, we have served two weekends already. We are actually helping them with process improvement right now. [\(25:21\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Oh, wow.

**BRIAN:** We are doing that on top of the work load we already have. And I mean DHS is stretched very thin there, Metro Health is stretched very thin, so I mean and that's a thing where all the departments have come together and donated time, donated efforts to that. And it's amazing.

**MOLLY:** Yeah, I've been reading a lot about sort of, how the city, like people are just tapping in and volunteering. The Migrant Resource Center, obviously, in San Antonio, Texas, out of we sort of knew this wave of people were coming through, but asylum seekers who have been dropped off at our bus station, who are just trying to figure out where to go next, and it is upwards of 200 people a day, um and San Antonio has sort of embraced, um what's going on and said "Come, we will take care of you, and we will worry about federal dollars later, right



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now, we just want to make sure you're fed and have somewhere safe to sleep." Which I really super appreciate about San Antonio generally. Um, I'm mildly, my brain is sort of on fire, because we've talked about 555 things--

**BRIAN:** (laughs) Sorry

**MOLLY:** No, no, no, it's so good! We are trying to draw lines between like all of them because we believe that everything is connected in some capacity. When you're talking more specifically about the fact that your team is brand new, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the fact that over the course of the last several months the City of San Antonio as an institution has gone through several changes. There has been an election, change in city management, um, has that, do you feel that in the City of San Antonio? I mean I feel like on the outside, we only hear what is like in the paper, right? And I'm curious what it feels like internally because it is a major organizational change. (27:01)

**BRIAN:** Um, yeah, the city management of San Antonio has always been tight, has always been a close knit group, and you can see that as it transferred from Sheryl Sculley to Erik Walsh. Um, you know Erik has been there for two decades. It's not like he's new coming in--

**MOLLY:** (light laughter) Wait, who's this guy?

**BRIAN:** (laughing) Yeah, exactly. So, but there is definitely, you know a shift. It's a new personality, it's a new tone, it's a new leadership. But, uh, I think it is the same values that we hold dear to, and we are still serving our community.

**MOLLY:** If you were to, um, like somebody's listening and hearing about the Office of Innovation for the first time, or even some of the other City services that are going on, what are some of the things that you give sort of as a call to action for our community? (27:48)

**BRIAN:** Um, join in to the solution. So you know, as a neighborhood association president for a while there, you know I have to take my City badge off--(laughs)

**MOLLY:** Yeah, you have to take it off.

**BRIAN:** You know there was a lot of complaints. Always emails and calls and texts, and um one thing I asked of my neighbors, provide constructive criticism, and if you don't know the solution, at least understand that I may not have the answer and help me find that answer. But don't come at me in an aggressive manner saying (deepens tone) "You need to do this!" It's a matter of, we need to do that. Kind of incorporating that we into everything that we do. All the solutions, all of the challenges, the issues we have in this city, and keeping the mindset, that you're going to have to be a part of that solution. (28:35)



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**MOLLY:** Yeah, we talk about it a lot and these podcasts have sort of said, we are *all* part of the systems we seek to change, and what does that mean? Like if I'm an individual in a cog of this giant system, how am I to ever make and create change? And it also stems from how do I present solutions? How do I break silos from within? How do I check my ego sometimes? So, I, yeah, I'm curious about, yes bring forth solutions, and that can come in the form of public meetings, or calling your City Council member, is that sort of where you are going with it?

**BRIAN:** Yes, just be willing to work with somebody. Yeah, be willing to not always be the combatant, be on the side of the fight. [\(29:19\)](#)

**MOLLY:** How does somebody say, "Hey, Brian, I feel like I live in an innovation zone or I live outside an innovation zone, and I have an idea," how does somebody give that to you?

**BRIAN:** So we have a CivTechSA program--

**MOLLY:** Okay, explain that CivTechSA

**BRIAN:** Yeah, so CivTechSA ranges from 6-12 to colleges and universities to startups to uh residency, and what we do there is we allow citizens to come in and we present challenges and they present solutions. There is possibility for procurement on some of these and on some of them, like you know, you might be able to start up a start up on some of that, so that's one option. [\(29:57\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Okay.

**BRIAN:** We are currently exploring a new opportunity for residents to come in and present their challenges and help us find solutions, and this may be a formal program. We are still trying to figure out if it is going to take flight--

**MOLLY:** You launched it here, first. I heard it, I heard that you launched it. (laughs)

**BRIAN:** (quietly mumbles) ahh yeah, you didn't hear this from me. But yeah, we know folks want to be a part of the solution but you have to have the capacity within the City of San Antonio to do that. [\(30:26\)](#)

**MOLLY:** No kidding, yeah.

**BRIAN:** And so we are trying to create that capacity, and I think everybody within the City of San Antonio wants that to happen.



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**MOLLY:** Okay, I will assume that this new program that has yet to be launched will have “SA” somewhere in the title because we are obsessed with it? (MOLLY laughs)

**BRIAN:** I don’t know, I don’t know.

**MOLLY:** I keep telling everybody, we launch anything and it has always got SA attached to it. At some point we are going to put “SA” on it. (BRIAN laughs) Um, I may change my name to MollySA just to see if it gets picked up like as a campaign. Um okay, so you’ve got the CivTech program coming, but in general--

**BRIAN:** 311SA!

**MOLLY:** Yes, 311SA, talk about that 311 is now an app?

**BRIAN:** Yes, so that was created here in San Antonio by CityFlag. Yay go CityFlag. But yeah, they created an app, 311SA, and it basically added gamification to an app where people could report--

**MOLLY:** I thought you were going to say Game of Thrones, and I thought (excited, louder tone) “it’s going viral right now!” (BRIAN laughs)

**BRIAN:** You never know how it’s going to end. (MOLLY laughs) Um, so it adds a level of gamification and they’ve seen a high turnout from that, so I think Code has said they have 97% success rates on correcting the issues that are reported through it which is amazing. It’s good for Code because it is easier to identify the issues. It is also good for them because they get to report back successes, which hasn’t been the case before.

**MOLLY:** Right. (31:45)

**BRIAN:** Yeah, so I think that 311SA App is something that, an example of how citizens can be engaged.

**MOLLY:** And that came out of CivTechSA? It came out of..?

**BRIAN:** No, it did not. This was--

**MOLLY:** It was just sideways to that, like “Hey we think we have an idea?”

**BRIAN:** (overlapped) I think it came out of ABDLP--



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**MOLLY:** That's amazing. So the Alex Briseno Leadership Development Program out of the Hispanic Chamber. Man! Look at that, I got all my letters. (BRIAN laughs) So what I think is interesting too, is that the City, at least as the Office of Innovation goes, I feel like I have to say working with the City is sometimes incredibly frustrating, right, like I am saying that as a resident, right. Like sometimes it's like, who am I supposed to call? I don't really understand it. Um, so for you to say instead of calling and being upset, we are all trying, we are all *just trying* to figure it out. (32:41)

**BRIAN:** The City of San Antonio has like 12,000 employees. And I think it was like 16,000 during the summer.

**MOLLY:** (sarcastically) Well then, why can't all 12,000 fix my problems! (BOTH laugh)

**BRIAN:** I know.

**MOLLY:** Why can't all 12,000 of you fix the pothole? (BRIAN laughs) (fake whiny) I don't understand!

**BRIAN:** Yeah, well we are working on it, we are working on it.

**MOLLY:** We are, um, consistently across the board, when we are thinking about city budgets, etc, when we talk about priorities, what rises to the top almost every single time is streets and infrastructure, that's like typical, right? Um, is that something that you feel, and I know that mobility is sort of one of your pillars in SmartSA, is that something that your office is sort of like is it peaking your interest as how can we do more stuff around innovation? (33:20)

**BRIAN:** Yeah, for sure. We know that the solutions we implement have to be connected in some form or fashion. And it's the same as when I was on the VIA board is "Yeah we can add a bus line, but how do people get to the bus stop, uh, if their sidewalks don't exist?"

**MOLLY:** (Laughs) Right, exactly!

**BRIAN:** So, uh, it's an issue, when we talk about micro-mobility, so like the scooters downtown and everybody complains about them being on the sidewalks. Well I need infrastructure on the streets to actually have them go down--

**MOLLY:** That's right.

**BRIAN:** And then I have some cyclists that complain about the scooters being on the street in the bike lane, and I'm like well I mean gotta--



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**MOLLY:** (laughs) Right, what's the, what--

**BRIAN:** (laughing) Gotta work together sometimes. But that's where we work really closely with TCI and Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, I mean this is where these partnerships come into play to connect the dots and say how do we work together and figure out the solution in one kind of flowing step.

**MOLLY:** Yeah, and I think we got to be better at celebrating incremental change and saying, "we still have work to do, but hey look at how far we have come."

**BRIAN:** Yeah, everything can't be solved tomorrow. (34:19)

**MOLLY:** Alright, (Jokes) But why not there is 12,000 employees Brian! (BRIAN laughs) Like you could solve it if all 12,000 were working on it. I'm just saying. Thank you so much for coming in here--

**BRIAN:** My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

**MOLLY:** (continues) and regaling us with all the things. Everything you heard about today can also be found online at [KLRN.org/thestorygoes](http://KLRN.org/thestorygoes), um and yeah, um, you know be part of the solution. Think we, not me.

**BRIAN:** (laughs) I love it.

**MOLLY:** We just made t-shirts. (BOTH laughing)



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