

No! Project Marvel

By Susan Strawn, *No! Project Marvel Coalition*

I'm here on behalf of *No! Project Marvel*. I want you to take away 3 points:

First. This issue is being deliberately and irresponsibly rushed. The Spurs are committed to play at Frost until 2032 – by their lease, and also by State law.

Council and the public only became aware of

this \$4B plan in November 2024 and the Council is now being asked to vote just 9 months later. This extraordinarily short timeline is particularly egregious given the City has yet to do any due diligence on the deal. At the same time, we are facing unprecedented challenges and uncertainty regarding our ability to fund key services.

The Council should stick to its guns in demanding information and taking time to assess the current budget challenges. It should not allow itself to be bullied to act on an artificial timeline.

Second. The City should provide neutral facts to inform debate, not a marketing campaign. The city's main pitch—that tourists, not taxpayers—will foot the bill for these projects is misleading and should be called out, not parroted.

Two funding sources, a \$250M infrastructure bond and the use of TIRZ-backed bonds for the Arena **will cost an estimated \$50M/yr. for 30 years in debt servicing.** This money comes from the taxpayer, not tourists! And, for reference, it is a more than last year's budget for PreKSA.

The truth is that *all* of the other proposed financing strategies—the City and County HOT tax and the Project Financing Zone—tap funding that could be put to other uses. These include uses currently paid from the city's general fund. The costs and benefits of the elements of *Project Marvel* must be weighed against permissible alternative uses which would free up millions for core services.

Third. Despite repeated requests from the Mayor

and Council, the city has yet to produce a cost/benefit analysis. The report released last week is jaw-droppingly vacuous. The report contains no market analysis, no cost analysis, no risk analysis and, importantly, no comparative benefit analysis that looks at whether the money is better spent elsewhere.

According to reporting by *KSAT*, a consensus of experts deemed the report (and I quote) “*useless.*” Or, as one explained, if Council wants to “*have real information about the costs and benefits.... [it's] useless.*” . . . “*If what they want is cover for doing what they already plan to do, it's perfect.*”

Neither the Council nor the public should accept this expensive, useless fig leaf as the cost/benefit analysis needed to make a critical and costly

policy decision.

If Council does accept this drivel, it is sending a clear signal that business as usual continues in San Antonio, and we are doubling down on an economy based on a generations-old strategy of building publicly-financed vanity projects—a strategy that has had no impact on generational poverty. This strategy is not based on data, but rather built on the enriching construction companies and developers, overtaxing homeowners, and providing poverty wages to our workers. We want a city people want to, and can afford to, live in, not one that just appeals to conventioners.

If San Antonio wants to do something transformational, it needs to turn its back on top-down development, demand facts and not salesmanship, and sharpen its critical thinking skills. We urge the Council to reject any ballot proposition until a real cost/benefit analysis has been done and informed decisions can be made.

BIO: *Susan Strawn is an attorney who served as prosecutor for the U.S. Department of Justice. She is part of the No Project Marvel Coalition and advocates for neighborhood and community-based issues.*



Members of the *No! Project Marvel Coalition* held a press conference on Monday, August 4, 2025 in front of the Alamodome calling for a delay in the ongoing downtown sports and entertainment district. Members included: *The Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, Pueblo over Profit, Domesticas Unidas, COPS/Metro, Historic Westside Residents Association* and the *Coalition for Dignified Housing*.