

CENTRAL TEXAS
**CATALYST
SUMMIT** 20
23

PRESENTED BY **aaro** AUSTIN AREA RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

AGENDA

8:00	Gallery Walk, Meet-and-Greet, Light Breakfast
9:00	Two Guys on Your Head – “What does it mean to be a Catalyst?”
9:30	Welcome
9:45	Researching Central Texas Growth and Regionalism
11:00	Breakout Session - On Building Resilience and Economy in Central Texas
Noon	Lunch
12:30	Honoring a True Catalyst – Neal Kocurek
1:30	Breakout Session - Diving Deeper On Policy Discussions
2:45	North Texas Regionalism
3:20	Super-Regionalism: Perspectives from County Officials
4:20	Breakout Session Reports
4:45	Reception

WELCOME



Good morning and welcome to the inaugural Central Texas Catalyst Summit! We are delighted to have you here. This summit has been meticulously curated to provide you with reliable information (data), thought-provoking ideas (presenters), and practices (leadership development) to guide or influence regional discussions within your spheres of influence. We have confidence that you will establish new connections, engage in confidential conversations, and leave inspired to take action. The AARO report and its associated data are accessible to the public at www.aaroregion.com. More detailed information about our speakers can be found on the event page, accessible using the QR code above.

Thank you for being part of this experience.
Sandy Dochen
2023 AARO Board Chair



Sandy Dochen, a native Austinite, boasts a distinguished career spanning the public and private sectors. Throughout his career, he has served in various capacities in education improvement and workforce development. In addition to his active AARO membership, he serves as a board member of the Shalom Austin Jewish Foundation and the Anti-Defamation League Austin Region. He is also a member of Early Matters Greater Austin, a business-oriented focus of United Way on early childhood education.

GALLERY WALK

The Gallery Walk at AARO's CTX Catalyst Summit features a captivating installation of impactful stories curated from KVUE's Boomtown series. The selected articles reflect a central narrative: the rapid transformation of Central Texas has a profound impact on individuals, cities, and counties. Each chosen story serves as a compelling narrative of growth and change, showcasing the diverse perspectives of the Central Texas community.



As you navigate through the pre-function space of the Zlotnik Family Ballroom, you'll encounter some of the journalists who will share their experiences in uncovering these remarkable stories. Take your time exploring the gallery, immersing yourself in the triumphs and struggles of the Central Texas region, and discover the hopes and dreams of our diverse community. The power of storytelling shines through, connecting us through shared experiences that bind our region together.

This gallery walk isn't just a standalone installation; it marks the commencement of a broader narrative that will unfold throughout the rest of the conference.

TWO GUYS ON YOUR HEAD

Dr. Art Markman and Dr. Bob Duke, with Producer Rebecca McInroy, from the KUT podcast "Two Guys on Your Head," will jumpstart your mind as they ponder on the innerworkings of catalysts.

Art Markman is currently the Vice Provost for Continuing and Professional Education and New Education Ventures at the University of Texas at Austin and the Annabel Irion Worsham Centennial Professor of Psychology and Marketing. He is a prolific writer and frequent contributor to Psychology Today, Fast Company, and the Harvard Business Review.

Bob Duke is the Marlene and Morton Meyerson Centennial Professor and Head of Music and Human Learning, Director of the Center for Music Learning, and a clinical professor in the Dell Medical School at the University of Texas at Austin. A former studio musician and public school music teacher, he has worked closely with children at-risk.

Rebecca McInroy is an award-winning show creator, host, and executive producer for KUT, KUTX, and KUT.ORG. Many of her programs combine the talent and knowledge of the Austin community with the production arm of KUT/X Public Media to produce content that bridges the gap between the public and higher education. She is the executive producer for "Two Guys on Your Head."



WELCOME REMARKS

Over the years, the Central Texas Catalyst Summit will rotate venues among various cities across the Central Texas region. In this inaugural year, the City of Austin welcomes you. The city's Mayor, a longstanding advocate for the Central Texas region, extends a warm welcome to participants and emphasizes the importance of forging stronger relationships to contribute to the prosperous future that lies ahead.



Mayor Kirk Watson has been immersed in public policy in both local and state government in Texas for over three decades. During his first stint as Austin mayor, 1997-2001, he earned praise for bringing different political factions together around transformative environmental and economic development initiatives. He provided regional leadership on air quality at a time when the region was poised to fall into non-attainment of federal air quality standards. Watson returned to Austin City Hall in 2023 for a third term as mayor after serving more than 13 years in the Texas Senate, where he led on issues such as public education, healthcare and government transparency.

RESEARCHING CENTRAL TEXAS GROWTH AND REGIONALISM

AARO recognizes the pivotal role of research as a fundamental element in evidence-based decision-making, cultivating public trust, and shaping a sustainable and vibrant future for Central Texas. In 2023, AARO commissioned two studies aimed at delivering a comprehensive and informed perspective on the intricate dynamics of the region's growth over the past two decades.

The qualitative research study *Lookback to Roadmap* gleaned insights from leaders in Central Texas concerning growth challenges and regional collaboration. Participants, representing diverse sectors, backgrounds, and communities across Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties, engaged in discussions about barriers to regional collaboration, lessons learned from the Envision Central Texas (ECT) initiative, and essential elements for fostering collaborative efforts.

The *Envision Central Texas: Looking Back and Glancing Forward* quantitative report assesses the region's growth from 2001 to 2021, comparing it with the projected growth scenarios that emanated from the ECT regional visioning process, and extending the analysis to include additional metrics and considerations for future decades.

Envision Central Texas (ECT) was established in 2001 as a non-profit organization with the aim of developing a vision for the future of the region. The organization worked extensively across the five-county MSA, engaging thousands of citizens in a collaborative effort to address critical growth issues.

*The data from these presentations will be available in the breakout sessions as context for participant discussions.
The full reports are available on the AARO website.*



PRESENTERS



Tamara Atkinson, CEO of Workforce Solutions Capital Area and Chair of the AARO Vision Committee will present highlights from the qualitative review of Envision Central Texas.



Dr. Kaylyn Levine, Assistant Professor at East Carolina University and co-author of the quantitative report, *Envision Central Texas: Looking Back and Glancing Forward*, will present key data and findings from the report.

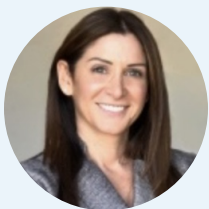
AM BREAKOUT SESSIONS

BUILDING RESILIENCE AND ECONOMY IN CENTRAL TEXAS



Building Healthy Communities: A Human-Centered Blueprint for Services

David Smith, Chief Executive Officer of United Way of Greater Austin, roadmaps a human-centered, community-driven approach to achieving health equity through innovation in social service delivery. Highlighting the disparity that often links zip codes to access of essential opportunities like jobs, grocery stores, childcare, schools, and safe housing. Smith unveils a blueprint for uniting a diverse array of partners while stressing the influence of social determinants of health.



Cultivating Resilience: Food Security for a Growing Region

Sari Vatske, President and CEO of Central Texas Food Bank, presents on the role leaders can take in securing health, sustainability, and justice within the framework of food systems as a driver for economic development and global standing. Her unique examination places a strong emphasis on creating an attractive environment for retailers and producers to invest and enhance locally sourced resources even as urban expansion and other vulnerabilities persist.



Powering the Future: The Semiconductor Ecosystem in Central Texas

Ed Latson, Chief Executive Officer of Opportunity Austin, will provide insights on the dynamic and growing Central Texas Semiconductor and Advanced Manufacturing industries, the geopolitical forces driving change, and potential benefits for the region. Latson will also discuss how regional leaders can effectively capitalize on the opportunities emerging from the CHIPS Act with a keen emphasis on collaboration.



Water Sustainability: The Win-Win Potential for Regional Water Management

Sharlene Leurig, Chief Executive Officer of Texas Water Trade, explores the water challenges confronting Central Texas and delves into the potential for effective collaboration between public and private sector entities to safeguard water security and resilience within the region. Her presentation showcases the application of market-based solutions and a “Net Zero Water” approach to increasing supply.

2023

CENTRAL TEXAS CATALYST AWARD



During the luncheon segment of our program, we pay tribute to the legacy of **Dr. W. Neal Kocurek**, a towering figure in the development of Central Texas. Born at St. David's Hospital in 1936, Neal's leadership prowess played a pivotal role in shaping the region's landscape, leaving an indelible mark on vital sectors such as health care, education, transportation, water, social equity, and regional stewardship.

In posthumously recognizing Neal Kocurek at this summit, we reflect on his contributions, from founding Tracor, Inc., Unitech, Inc., and Radian International LLC., to his distinguished tenure as President and CEO of St. David's Health Care System. He served as a catalyst for the creation of the St. David's HealthCare and related foundations (St. David's Foundation and Georgetown Health Foundation) and Envision Central Texas. He was pivotal to the successful establishment of landmarks such as the Austin Convention Center, West Austin Youth Association, State Highway 130 and the Austin History Center building.

Today, we acknowledge an unwavering commitment to confronting long-term challenges with years of dedicated effort, celebrating the life and enduring impact of Neal Kocurek, a true catalyst for positive change in Central Texas.

PM BREAKOUT SESSIONS

DIVING DEEPER ON POLICY DISCUSSIONS



Housing Central Texas: “All Types of Housing, For All Kinds of People, in All Parts of Town”

Nora Linares-Moeller, Executive Director of HousingWorks Austin, facilitates an exploration of the housing challenges facing Central Texas, delving into critical concerns, including the soaring cost of housing and affordability. Her presentation will provide data-driven insights for each county in the region and propose a range of strategies to tackle these issues.



Advancing Social Equity: Next Steps for an Inclusive Future

Raul Alvarez, Executive Director of the Community Advancement Network (CAN), delivers a forward-looking perspective on equity in Central Texas, providing data-driven insights and a diverse set of strategies to promote a more equitable region.



Understanding Environmental Considerations and Vulnerabilities for a Stronger Region

Dr. Robert Mace, Executive Director of the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, speaks on the region’s environmental challenges and opportunities, providing an overview of the complex issues of water resource management, climate change resilience, and natural resource conservation.



Mobilizing the Central Texas of Tomorrow: Infrastructure and Leadership

Ginger Goodin, Partner with Blue Door Strategy and Research, offers a deep dive into the intricate system of transportation in Central Texas, examining the region’s rapid expansion and its close relationship with mobility. Drawing upon her extensive experience in transportation research and policy, Ginger will explore the potential for regional improvement in the face of issues like traffic congestion and the need for increased regional connectivity.

NORTH TEXAS REGIONALISM

The Dallas-Fort Worth region boasts decades of experience in regionalism, placing it ahead of Central Texas. Arlington Mayor Tom Vandergriff, a prominent advocate for the region for nearly three decades, played a key role in this journey. Today, we are honored to have his son, Victor Vandergriff, with us. Victor is a distinguished business and civic leader, both in North Texas and within state government, continuing the legacy of regional leadership.



Victor Vandergriff currently serves as Executive Director, Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition. He has been “Mr. Transportation” in North Texas serving as the North Texas Commissioner on the Texas Transportation Commission. He was Chair of the North Texas Tollway Authority and served as the Chair of the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles Board.

SUPER-REGIONALISM

The concept of the Austin-San Antonio super region, or the San Antonio-Austin Mega-Metro, has been receiving growing attention in recent months, bringing us closer to a tangible reality. This idea gained popularity through the book “The Texas Triangle” (2021) and more recently through the San Antonio PBS special titled “San Antonio - Austin: The Emerging Mega-Metro.” Business leaders and elected officials have united in their efforts towards ambitious objectives. Gain firsthand insights into these endeavors from the county judges of these two interconnected regions.



Judge Andy Brown presides over the Travis County Commissioners Court which oversees the county’s \$1.4 billion annual budget, acts as the County’s chief administrator, and is the Director of Emergency Management for the County. Since taking office, Judge Brown has significantly increased resources to historically underserved communities, including starting a mass COVID-19 vaccination effort prioritizing communities of color. During winter storm Uri, Judge Brown directed additional food, water, and utility support to the hardest hit areas in Travis County.



Judge Peter Sakai is relatively new to the office of County Judge, having taken office January 1, 2023. Previously, he spent two and half decades in service as a court judge, where he created revolutionary new programs that protected children and put struggling families back together, implemented several cost-saving protocols, and innovative programs, and brought together key stakeholders to find viable solutions to countless programs. Judge Sakai is leaning into his experience redesigning systems as he works to update Bexar County government to provide greater transparency and efficiency.

FAREWELL

SUMMIT TAKEAWAYS

As we reach the conclusion of the inaugural Central Texas Catalyst Summit, I want to express my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for being a vital part of this transformative event. Your presence, engagement, and commitment have made this summit an incredible success, and it's truly heartening to witness the collaborative spirit that defines our community.

Throughout the day, we've navigated through insightful discussions, gained valuable perspectives from esteemed speakers, and forged connections that will undoubtedly fuel the momentum of positive change in Central Texas. This summit was not just a gathering; it was a convergence of minds, a celebration of big ideas, and a commitment to shaping a vibrant and resilient future for our region.

As we part ways today, let us carry with us the knowledge gained, the connections established, and the inspiration to act as catalysts in our own spheres of influence. The journey towards a thriving and interconnected Central Texas continues, and it is a journey that we undertake together.

On behalf of the entire AARO membership and staff, I extend heartfelt thanks to each one of you. Safe travels, and until we meet again, let the spirit of today's summit guide our actions towards a future of shared success and prosperity.

Jeffrey Richard
2024 AARO Board Chair-elect



Jeffrey Richard is a Senior Consultant at J. L. Powers & Associates with more than 35 years of professional experience in high-level interaction with senior policy makers, business executives and elected officials at the local state and federal levels. A former elected official himself, he is also a lifetime member of the NAACP and Urban League.

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