

NEWS YOU CAN USE

What is ULI San Antonio's "Secret Sauce" for Growth?

ULI San Antonio is one of the fastest growing and most engaged District Councils. As of January, they have grown 18% in fiscal year 2020! Each of their members have attended an average of 3.48 events in the last year (the average across the DC network is 2.72), and 76% of their membership has either attended an event or served on a committee in the last year (the average across the DC network is 68.6%). We asked Janis Ploetz, Senior Manager of ULI San Antonio, what their "secret sauce" for growth has been. She said:

"I do have to say it is all of the things you mentioned...the frequency of events, beer, etc...but I also believe it is largely due in part to our fantastic leadership from the top down. I know throughout his term as Chair these past two years, Madison Smith has made an effort to meet with and **mentor** just about every one of our Committee Chairs inspiring them to offer programming and events that will in turn excite our membership to get involved to do what they can to impact the planned growth and vibrancy of San Antonio. Madison, Omar Gonzalez [the incoming chair] and our other leaders continue to engage both the public and private sectors on behalf of ULI San Antonio and have made great strides in establishing our District Council as a thought leader for best practices in land use.

Our programming and events have all been excellent with quality content and great speakers, so in turn the word has spread that these are all must attend dates! These are planned and executed by our Programs Committee (Leadership Luncheons & Lunch & Learns), ULI NEXT (twice monthly programmed meetups), Young Leaders Group-led Project Tours, Coffee Talks & Socials, Mentorship Committee-led Mentorship Forum, WLI committee led Boardroom Breakfasts and Local Product Council quarterly meetings.

One thing that has worked particularly well for our Leadership Luncheons is building in comp seats for all our Sponsors to these four signature events every year. That almost guarantees that every seat is filled – and we are selling out these events regularly now with attendance between 400 and 550.

I also believe promotion and branding is key. We have a fantastic communications committee who has done a great job in covering our events as they happen. I also post Canva promos for upcoming events on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, but most importantly I send out a weekly ULI San Antonio newsletter to all our members and prospects that highlights the events open for registration, as well as a list of Save The Dates for upcoming events. That way, people can make plans well in advance.

Because we exceeded our Sponsorship Goals, we offered ULI student memberships to the UTSA Urban & Regional Planning graduate students who participated in Urban Plan, as well as those in the Real Estate, Finance and Development program. That also contributed to the growth in our numbers.

I am not sure how much secret sauce there is in any of this...I know all DCs do the same. I believe it is our MEMBERS who are enthusiastic about making an IMPACT and the quality of the programs and events they plan! We all share the common thread that we love San Antonio and want to see it thrive! ULI is the vehicle that provides that opportunity – to see what is and what can be - and gives us the knowledge and inspiration to get there!"