



[S.A. VIPs set to sell city at China expo](#)

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Two airliners are taking off early this morning from San Antonio International Airport to launch the city's biggest economic push in Asia.

One San Antonio group is traveling straight to Shanghai via San Francisco, to represent the city at the Shanghai Expo world's fair.

A smaller group, with Mayor Julián Castro and other city and chamber of commerce leaders, briefly will stop first in Japan for a courtesy call to Toyota Motor Corp. executives before continuing on to Shanghai to unite with the rest of the delegation.

San Antonio is heavily invested in this week's trip. Area companies pooled more than \$500,000 for the three "San Antonio Salute" days Tuesday through Thursday at the \$61 million U.S. Pavilion.

"Make no mistake, this is a trade mission," said China-born City Councilwoman Elisa Chan, who with former Mayor Henry Cisneros raised the city's contribution for the U.S. Pavilion.

After the opening ceremony for the San Antonio days on Tuesday, the Alamo City's big trade mission, a pitch to foreign-reserves-rich China, will occur Wednesday at "The Business in San Antonio Seminar" in the VIP Conference Room at the U.S. Pavilion.

Nine San Antonians will present different aspects of San Antonio's business profile to an estimated 80 guests during the seminar. Half of the audience will be Shanghai-area businessmen, including bankers and company site selectors. The remainder will be representatives of Shanghai's various chambers of commerce and their guests.

The San Antonio Spurs may be eliminated from the NBA playoffs, but the specter of the Spurs will be deployed in a full-court press on the Chinese audience.

The Spurs, in other words, will be the main marketing angle to reach the Chinese business audience because the NBA is wildly popular in China. Spurs gear will be handed out as the audience hears about relatively low-cost real estate, construction partnership opportunities, utility capacities and the city's quality of life.

In fact, the city's contribution entitles San Antonio to run its promotional videos inside and out of the U.S.

Pavilion for two weeks, perhaps longer. A short video featuring Spurs player Tony Parker and his wife, Eva Longoria Parker, will loop on the building's giant outdoor video board while a longer video about San Antonio will be continuously displayed inside.

In all, nearly 70 San Antonians will represent the city at the Shanghai Expo. The expo is billed as the largest event in human history, with an expected attendance of more than 70 million people over the six-month run that started May 1. Several hundred thousand people a day will visit the world's fair, with nearly every one planning a stop at the U.S. Pavilion.

When Mayor Castro visits Japan, it will be his first visit to that country and his first face-to-face meeting with Shoichiro Toyoda, better known as "Dr. Toyoda," the carmaker's honorary chairman.

The Shanghai Expo is the main event. San Antonio's world's fair occurred 42 years ago, and it changed the city forever. San Antonio probably wouldn't be an NBA city if not for HemisFair '68.

The airplanes ferrying San Antonio's delegation to Shanghai will link the two fairs across the decades and connect part of San Antonio's future to China's.

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