

Texas projects dominate Smart 20 Awards at global conference



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Texas stood out as a major innovator at the 2025 Smart 20 Awards, with five of the world's top 20 most transformative smart projects hailing from the Lone Star State. Honorees from Richardson, Central Texas, Brownsville, Seguin and San Antonio were recognized center stage April 15 during the Smart Cities Connect Spring Conference & Expo, hosted this year in San Antonio.

The Smart 20 Awards, presented annually by Smart Cities Connect, honor projects that demonstrate visionary planning and implementation of forward-thinking technologies. Winners showcase new approaches to tackling long-standing urban challenges—from transportation to public safety—using innovative tools that change how cities function and serve their citizens.

The awards ceremony capped off a three-day global conference that drew urban planners, civic leaders and technology experts from around the world. One of the most well-attended sessions focused on San Antonio's use of artificial intelligence and digital twins to improve public safety.

Attendees learned how the city applies real-time data analytics to support proactive decision-making—a model others hope to replicate.

Planners from cities such as Austin, Raleigh and Houston also shared strategies for advancing next-generation mobility systems. Other sessions covered key smart city pillars, including infrastructure, sustainability, community engagement and digital equity.

Representatives from Lima, Peru, and Umzimvubu, South Africa, added a global perspective, emphasizing that while solutions vary by geography, collaboration and innovation are universal tools for progress.

While the awards include recognition and a trophy, many cities say the real prize is community transformation. The validation encourages continued investment in time, technology and collaboration—all of which are essential for long-term success.

One 2025 honoree, Las Vegas, demonstrated this vividly. Following the 2017 Route 91 Harvest Festival mass shooting, the city adopted an AI-powered weapon detection platform called ZeroEyes, which can detect visible firearms on security footage in under 20 seconds. The system has been integrated into public infrastructure to strengthen emergency response and situational awareness. It is the first city in the nation to have implemented this type of technology in its public transportation system.

Past award-winning projects have addressed more everyday issues as well. In Austin, smart mobility tools are being used to relieve traffic congestion. In Chattanooga, city leaders prioritized expanding high-speed internet to underserved communities. Cities like Memphis and

Dallas have implemented LED street lighting systems that not only cut energy costs but improve nighttime visibility and safety.

City leaders often work alongside elected officials to bring these solutions to life.

As cities around the world prepare for growing populations and increasing environmental and economic pressures, the Smart 20 Awards serve as a reminder that innovation is not just possible—it's already happening.

Smart 20 Awards Winners 2025

A Multi-Modal Cyber Traffic Infrastructure for Sustainable Mobility (Richardson, TX)

Aurora's Digital Twin (Aurora, Canada)

Central Texas Construction Partnership Program (Central Texas)

Chatham Connect: Chatham Area Transit Electric Vehicle Micro Transit Project (Savannah, GA)

City of Brownsville: Pioneering a Scalable and Citizen-Centric Smart City Vision (Brownsville, TX)

City of Sarasota Smart City Initiative (Sarasota, FL)

Cooling Our City: An Equitable Guide to Tree Planting (Kitchener, Canada)

Genius 5.0 Smart City and Waste Management (Florence, Italy)

GeoEngage Community Catalyst Initiative (Seguin, TX)

Ghost Intersection Uses Real-World Data to Improve Driver and VRU Safety (Peachtree Corners, GA)

Hilliard City Lab (Hilliard, OH)

Homeless Outreach (Fort Lauderdale, FL)

Integrated Real Time AI Traffic Signal Control Revolution (Taoyuan City, Taiwan)

Limestone County Water and Sewer Authority Smart Utility Project (Limestone County, AL)

Link US West Broad BRT Public Engagement Process (Columbus, OH)

New Taipei Smart Poles: Building a New Paradigm for Future Cities (New Taipei City, Taiwan)

San Antonio Smart City and Streetlight Operations Systems (San Antonio, TX)

The Cleveland Metroparks: Leveraging IoT and LoRaWAN for Smart Environmental Management and Data Collection (Cleveland, OH)

Thomasville Heights: Building Strategies for Energy Efficient Retrofits (Atlanta, GA)

ZeroEyes AI Detection (Las Vegas, NV)

Photo Courtesy City of Richardson Active Transportation Plan

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