



# SAN ANTONIO CONSERVATION SOCIETY

October 10, 2018

Historic and Design Review Commission Joint Meeting with Planning Commission

Re: Alamo Plaza

Over the summer, the San Antonio Conservation Society collected some 7,500 signatures to maintain Alamo Plaza as a public place and preserve its historic structures. Since 2015, we have urged the incorporation of three historic buildings into the new Alamo museum. We have been encouraged that Mayor Ron Nirenberg, Councilman Roberto Treviño and City Manager Sheryl Sculley also called for their preservation, as outlined in the 2017 Alamo Master Plan.

The 1882 Crockett Block, 1923 Palace Theatre, and 1921 Woolworth Building received City Landmark designation in 1978 and have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places as contributing buildings in the Alamo Plaza Historic District since 1977. The buildings' historic and architectural merit has long been acknowledged by San Antonio's City Council and the National Park Service. The San Antonio Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and The National Trust for Historic Preservation have urged the buildings' reuse based on their significance.

The plan today calls for an analysis of the buildings' significance and re-use potential. Unfortunately, the description of this process is biased in favor of demolition. One page criticizes the structural configurations of all three buildings, although only the Palace's floors are out of alignment and the altered interiors of both 1920s buildings allow for new museum space behind their existing facades.

Alfred Giles, the city's premier architect, designed the Crockett Block, which appears alone in *some* of the renderings for the future Alamo museum. However, the Woolworth Building's position on Alamo Plaza made it the most important site where the first voluntary and peaceful desegregation of Southern lunch counters occurred on March 16, 1960. Three days later, Jackie Robinson compared San Antonio's decision to integrate its lunch counters with his own entry into major league baseball. The demolition of this building would continue the marginalization of sites with historic ties the African-American experience.

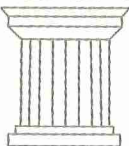
Reusing these historic buildings not only preserves the plaza's authenticity, it avoids the mistake of trading real historic fabric for a conjectural reconstruction or incompatible new construction. These buildings can be reverent and contribute to a "world-class" museum. The Louvre and Orsay in Paris, Uffizi in Florence, and our McNay, Witte, and San Antonio Museum of Art are all in repurposed historic buildings.

Respectfully submitted,

SAN ANTONIO CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Susan Beavin, President

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The Purpose of this Society is to preserve and to encourage the preservation of historic buildings, objects, places and customs, relating to the history of Texas, its natural beauty, and all that is admirably distinctive to our State; and by such physical and cultural preservation to keep the history of Texas legible and intact to educate the public, especially the youth of today and tomorrow, with knowledge of our inherited regional values.

