

**MEDIA CONTACT: Lewis Vetter, President
Conservation Society of San Antonio
210-621-7872 (cell), 210-224-6163 (office)**

Press Release FAQs – April 2, 2025

LAWSUIT

Q: Why is the Conservation Society filing a lawsuit?

A: “We want to help! We think this will help the City, UTSA, THC, the Spurs, and most importantly, our friends and neighbors who haven’t had a way to join the conversation.

We also want everyone to pause and take a serious look at the benefits of keeping this huge, iconic heritage building and re-use it in a way that demonstrates to our kids how historic places enhance and stay relevant to our evolving, modern life.

Q: The THC approved the demolition permit. How can you say UTSA didn’t follow the Texas Antiquities Code?

A: Our lawsuit contends the requirements were not fulfilled properly.

Q: Why is the City named in the lawsuit? Isn’t UTSA doing the demolition?

A: The City’s comments on Project Marvel suggest the need for a Section 106 review process under the National Historic Preservation Act, and that process has not happened.

It seems the City may not realize that they have triggered a Federal Law that requires a special kind of review before the UTSA demolition work. This pause will help both of them, giving them time to comply and avoid penalties.

Q: What does the 1967 deed say?

A: It says that the City transfers the property to the State for a permanent building and exhibit serving all of Texas.

Q: What will you do if the judge rules against you?

A: We are confident in our case.

Q: What are you asking for?

A:

1. To stop any and all demolition at the site until the City and UTSA have complied with all requirements of the Texas Antiquities Code and the National Historic Preservation Act. Require that the building be mothballed and secured against the elements and trespassers during this process.
2. Require the City and UTSA to notify the Texas Historical Commission and take all other actions to comply with the Texas Natural Resources Code and the Nation Historic Preservation Act.
3. Prevent the City and UTSA from entering any new contracts related to this project.
4. That the Conservation Society of San Antonio be included as a party on any Memorandums of Understanding or Agreement between the Texas Historic Commission and UTSA or the City of San Antonio for the Texas Pavilion.
5. That all these processes include opportunities for taxpayers to comment and participate – public entities using public funding must include public input!

DEMOLITION

Q: Isn't the demolition too far along to save the building?

A: That is for the Court to decide. We cannot be certain of the true condition of the building because of the secretive way it has been handled. They have provided incomplete information, and we need the Court to determine what the real options and costs are. We assert it is not too late, and the public will save money by stopping demolition and reusing the building.

Q: Why did they take off the roof, or what are they doing now it looks pretty far gone, etc.:

A: The thin metal panels they took off screen the penthouse and don't damage the structure at all. It's a REALLY stout building. State law mandated that it be constructed to be PERMANENT, and it's concrete and steel! Thankfully, the court could help us all find out how much it actually costs to tear down such a big building that was built to be permanent!"

Q: Didn't the building have many flaws and would be very costly to reuse?

A: No. UTSA's own report available on its website from November 2023 found the building and systems to be in good shape with less than \$7 million in deferred maintenance. They are currently spending more than half of that amount for the demolition contract.

- UTSA's frequently referenced \$178 million renovation cost was to upgrade the building to current museum standards, which no longer applies.
- It qualifies for a 45% rehabilitation tax credit that a private entity, such as the SPURS, could use.
- UTSA could sell the building, or enter a partnership, which would not require them to invest in renovation at all.

Q: What about UTSA's need to monetize the site to fund a new home for the Institute of Texan Cultures Museum.

A: The State Legislature is required to fund the museum. Plus, the recent merger between UTSA and UT Health San Antonio is reported to come with a \$2.2 billion budget and a \$1.1 billion endowment. And what does monetize mean – sell, lease, for how much?

PROJECT MARVEL AND THE SPURS

Q: Are you trying to block Project Marvel?

A: No. We love the Spurs! The Conservation Society has always said that the building could be part of Project Marvel. It could be part of the Spurs stadium. Moreover, the planning and financing for Project Marvel have not happened yet, so demolition is premature.

Q: What about the SPURS?

A: We don't want UTSA, the City or anyone to tarnish the image of OUR Spurs by using them as an excuse to demolish a treasured heritage building that belongs to generations of taxpayers.

Q: How is the building associated with Mexican American heritage?

A: William Merriweather Peña, one of the few prominent Mexican American architects of the twentieth century, made significant contributions to the building's design. It is San Antonio's only downtown landmark designed by a Mexican American architect, as well as a place ahead of its time in fostering cultural awareness and pride among generations of local Mexican Americans and Latinos.

- San Antonio has seen a disproportionate number of landmark-worthy buildings significant to the Mexican American community destroyed by urban renewal and development pressures.
- According to Latinos in Heritage Conservation, less than 1% of sites on the National Register of Historic Places are associated with Latino heritage, despite Latinos being the largest and one of longest standing ethnic groups within the country.