

## **Remarks of Lewis Vetter, President**

### **Conservation Society of San Antonio**

**Wednesday April 2, 2025 at 9:15 AM**

Good morning. I am Lewis Vetter, President of the Conservation Society of San Antonio.

I am here to announce that the [Conservation Society of San Antonio](#) has filed a law suit in District Court to halt demolition of the 1968 Texas Pavilion in Hemisfair, formerly the site of the Institute of Texan Cultures.

The suit states that the demolition violates the original 1967 deed that transferred the property from the City of San Antonio to the State of Texas. The suit also states that the University of Texas at San Antonio and the City of San Antonio have moved forward with the demolition without following the requirements of the Texas Antiquities Code and those of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Conservation Society has been fighting for this building for over a decade. Last year we successfully listed it on the National Register of Historic Places and as a State Antiquities Landmark. These designations received support at the national, state, and local level from organizations such as the Society of Architectural Historians, Latinos in Heritage Conservation, Preservation Texas, the Mexican American Civil Rights Institute, the Westside Preservation Alliance, and the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center.

This building has huge significance in the city's history - beginning with Hemisfair 1968 and continuing as the Institute of Texan Cultures and Folk Life Festival for half a century. It is the only downtown landmark designed by a Mexican American architect.

While this is a large building, it is less than one-fifth of the Project Marvel site. It can be reused. The building is 180,000 square feet of steel and concrete construction in a prime location that could be renovated into a multitude of uses, such as an educational

facility, a culinary school, or even part of the Spurs stadium. It is often twice as expensive to build a new building than to renovate one that already exists. Demolition will add at least 40,000 cubic feet of debris to our landfills.

What is the rush to tear down this building? There are so many undecided issues about Project Marvel including public financing, the existing Spurs lease at the Frost Bank Center; tepid public support for Project Marvel; and uncertainty of state and federal transportation funds. This demolition is premature until a plan, and financing, are in place.

We believe a pause in the work will provide a much-needed chance for the public entities making the decisions to engage with the taxpaying community and find a reasonable path forward for a new use that will be mutually beneficial.

The Conservation Society began in 1924 and was pivotal in the preservation of the San Antonio Missions beginning with restoration of the San Jose Granary in 1933, creation of a National Park in 1978 and nomination as World Heritage Site beginning in 2006. The Society was instrumental in the creation of the River Walk and has preserved hundreds of sites, including Casa Navarro, the Aztec Theatre, Ursuline College, the Rand Building and Yturri-Edmunds House and Mill. The Society provides over \$100,000 in building and educational grants to San Antonians each year, has over 1100 members and offers a range of educational programming and resources.