The Conservation Society of San Antonio
THE PRESERVATION ADVOCATE

THE CONSERVATION SOCIETY OF SAN ANTONIO
MAKING HISTORY BY SAVING HISTORY.™

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# History Under Siege: Preserving Section 106

*Elaine Vetter, Society Third Vice President*



Section 106 is a core provision of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. On October 15, 1966, President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). He said it was meant "to give part of our country back to its people."[1] It ensures that federal agencies evaluate how their undertakings may affect historic properties—defined as buildings, sites, structures, objects, or districts listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. For over sixty years the American people have depended on this act, whether they knew it or not, to help protect their right to know what is going on in their town and to have a voice. A State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which is a governor-designated agency, exists in all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, and Freely Associated States. These offices lead statewide efforts to identify, evaluate, protect, and promote historic and archaeological resources. Section 106 has been used in San Antonio since the 1970s, and it is still applied whenever a federal action could impact historic properties, with the THC (Texas Historical Commission) overseeing the review and mitigation process.

Senate bill **S.5653** would make the most significant changes to Section 106 since its 1966 enactment, narrowing what counts as an "undertaking," redefining "adverse effects," and embedding the consultation process directly into law. The bill was introduced in the Senate by Sens. Shelly Moore Capito (RWV), Mike Lee (RUT), Sheldon Whitehouse (DRI), and Martin Heinrich (DNM). What will it do? Weaken your voice! There is no House bill number associated with S.5653 at this point.

Preservation groups, tribal organizations, and historical societies warn that the legislation fundamentally weakens Section 106 which currently requires federal agencies to evaluate the impact of their actions on historic and cultural sites.

Supporters and bill sponsors contend that the changes are necessary to eliminate bureaucratic red tape, reduce costly project delays, and modernize federal infrastructure permitting while maintaining core legal safeguards.

**Key Impacts on Section 106[2]**

- **Discretionary and Optional Consultation:** The bill would make consultation with affected communities, the public, local governments, and State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) optional or at the sole discretion of the federal agency rather than a mandatory requirement.
- **Reduced Tribal Consultation:** The federal government would no longer be strictly required to consult with Native American Tribes or seek their expertise regarding federal impacts on places of religious and cultural significance.

1 https://savingplaces.org/section106/updates/tell-your-senators-protect-community-voices-and-historic-places

2 https://savingplaces.org/section106/updates/video-guidance-for-advocates-proposed-section-106

SECTION 106 CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



# From the President

*Betty Bueché, President*

Did you know that our organization, which is commonly called "The Conservation Society of San Antonio (CSSA)" is actually made up of TWO organizations? Each has their own designation from the Internal Revenue Service. Under the Internal Revenue Code, The Conservation Society is a 501(c)(4), and The Conservation Society Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization. The differences include purpose, eligibility for tax deductions and ability to participate in political activities such as the advocacy work that serves the purposes established by our Founders.

**The Society, 501(c)(4):** This is an advocacy group that promotes historic preservation and conservation and sometimes engages in lobbying to foster civil improvements that promote the advantages of this work. It also allows a yearly festival that celebrates local customs. Although a 501(c)4 operates primarily to serve the local community, donations to a 501(c)(4) are not tax deductible. It is this status that allows the Conservation Society to advocate for such things as preserving Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act.

**The Foundation, 501(c)(3):** The Foundation is a public charity that operates exclusively for several of the eight allowable IRS designated purposes. Its purposes are charitable, educational, scientific, and literary. It is tax exempt, donations are tax deductible, and eligible for grants and government funding. It is prohibited from political campaigning and may engage in very limited lobbying.

Our administrative structure and management of funds is organized around these two IRS designations. Your generous donations are fully tax deductible when made to the Conservation Society Foundation. If you have questions, please ask our staff or members of our Executive Committee. Thank you to all donors to the 501(c)(3), and to those who support the advocacy work of the 501(c)(4)!



# From the Executive Director

*Angelica Docog*



In September, I had the opportunity to attend the National Preservation Summit in Washington, D.C. The beautiful Washington National Cathedral hosted the Summit. It was great to see how the National Cathedral was able to transform itself into a conference space without losing any of its historical integrity. The theme for this year's Summit was, *All People Are Created Equal*, and the featured speakers highlighted the importance of community revitalization, the interpretation of the past to foster a shared future, and unity through historic places.




Historic places have the unique ability to demonstrate and illustrate the power that historic preservation has in protecting public memory and protecting historical community assets. Speakers at the Summit reinforced that historic preservation is also cultural preservation and that we as preservationists have a greater responsibility in preserving our past for our future. What is a nation without history? This is why the work of the Conservation Society is more important than ever before.

# History Under Siege: Preserving Section 106

*continued from page 1*

- **Narrowed Scope and Applicability:** The legislation reduces the number and types of federal actions required to comply with Section 106, narrows the geographic area considered during reviews, and restricts what qualifies as a protected historic property or adverse effect.
- **Strict Statutory Timelines:** It imposes rigid deadlines—such as a 30-day or 60-day default window—to define affected areas and identify historic resources, which critics argue is too short for thorough evaluations.
- **Expanded Agency Control and Self-Certification:** Agencies gain broader unilateral authority, shifting from a collaborative review partnership to a centralized, federal-focused process where agencies can have greater control over self-certified determinations.
- **Restricted Judicial Review:** The bill limits legal avenues, deadlines, and remedies for the public, tribes, or preservation groups seeking to challenge agency decisions in court.

How has Section 106 impacted San Antonio? A good example would be the John H. Wood Jr. Courthouse Aka Confluence Theater and The U.S. Pavilion in Hemisfair Park. The General Services Administration (GSA) planned to sell and transfer vacated federal properties in Hemisfair Park to the City of San Antonio. The sale triggered a Section 106 review, allowing public meetings, written comments and consulting party status for local groups such as the Conservation Society of San Antonio. To avoid losing these two historic 1968 World's Fair structures (the only World's Fair held in the south in the 1960s), stakeholder input led the GSA to place preservation covenants on the buildings. These covenants block demolition and require adaptive reuse as the city redevelops the area. The history of these buildings focused on their time as part of the 1968 Hemisfair, innovative midcentury designs and the fact that the Confluence Theater once housed the largest curvilinear viewing screen in the world! The Texas Historical Commission, our SHPO in Texas, and stakeholders participated in the negotiations of the preservation covenant terms. These buildings are now on a path toward renovation as event venues in the City's proposed Project Marvel, sports and entertainment district. This is just one example of how Section 106 has been applied in San Antonio. Section 106 provided the means for local citizens to speak directly to representatives of the federal government prior to the City's acquisition, giving taxpayers a voice in shaping the GSA's agreement with the City of San Antonio. Without Section 106, we would have been remembering when these two historic buildings existed. Thanks to Section 106 and your comments, future generations will have the opportunity to use the Confluence Theater and U.S. Pavilion in their repurposed forms.






**Where do the changes to Section 106 currently stand?** The Section 106 regulatory overhaul is currently in OIRA (Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs) which is within the White House Office of Budget and Management review. It has not yet been published in the Federal Register. This means the formal Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) has not been issued, and the public comment phase has not begun**. Bottom Line: There is still time to voice your opinion.**

You have grown up with Section 106 as your *watchful eye*; do not allow these proposed changes to Section 106 to occur without speaking up! Fighting for Historic Preservation is what The Conservation Society of San Antonio is known for. As an active member of The Society, you have made a commitment to preservation. We are the Conservation Society of San Antonio, one of the largest and most respected groups of our type in the United States. PRESERVATION IS OUR MISSION!

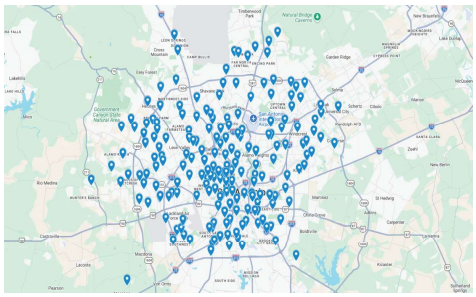
# *Heritage Education Tours: What We Do!*



Created in 1960, as "Texas Under Six Flags," the tours debuted as an educational film created by Mr. Long of the Witte Museum. As seen in the Society Minutes from a General Membership Meeting on January 28, 1960, "Mrs. Tapp introduced Mr. Long of the Witte Museum, who showed a colored film on "Texas Under Six Flags" accompanied by a commentary. This film was designed to give school children a better knowledge of Texas History and as an aid to the teachers. The film was made up of many beautiful scenes of those buildings and areas representing Texas during the various periods. Mrs. Tapp thanked Mr. Long for his fine program on behalf of the Society."



66 years later, this committee has blossomed from a film on Texas history to a tour through multiple historic locations around San Antonio, led by knowledgeable park rangers, professional tour guides, dedicated volunteers, and even our local Canary Islanders and Buffalo Soldiers! Since 1998, over 39,000 students have attended these tours from the greater San Antonio area as seen in the below map.





These field trips are offered to local San Antonio schools' fourth grade classes on a rotating basis. The first ten to respond will receive an all expenses paid trip, including transportation, docent, and admission fees, if any, by the Society. We would like to thank H-E-B for their generous grant this year that has helped us sponsor these field trips.



H-E-B Helping Here

We would also like to thank San Antonio Missions National Historical Park – Mission San José, Bexar Heritage Center, Yturri-Edmunds Historic Site, World Heritage Center, and Spanish Governor's Palace for hosting our 600+ students this year!



# *Junior Associates: Learning to Love Where We Live!*

*Ashtyn Moore, Juniors President*



Our Junior Associates have had a busy season, and every outing carried the same lesson: the places that make San Antonio special are here because someone chose to save them.

That is the heart of what the Conservation Society has done for more than a century. Preservation is not only about old buildings. It is about stories, neighborhoods, and the people who keep a city's character alive. Our goal with the Junior Associates is simple. We want young people to see our history up close, ask questions about it, and grow into the next generation of caretakers.



This season our Junior Associates explored San Antonio from the water, inside historic walls, and in the heart of the community. For some, our river barge ride was their first trip down the River Walk—a river the Conservation Society fought to save in the 1920s, when some leaders wanted to cover it and turn it into a storm drain.

At Casa Navarro, the group met the story of José Antonio Navarro, a San Antonio–born Tejano leader who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence and spent his life defending Tejano rights. Our members then tried writing the way Navarro would have, dipping quill pens made from turkey feathers into ink.



A day at the San Antonio Zoo in historic Brackenridge Park reminded us that preservation also means caring for wildlife and green spaces, and it was a day of fun and friendship too.

Closer to home, our members organized a food drive that benefited three local churches. Thank you to everyone who donated!

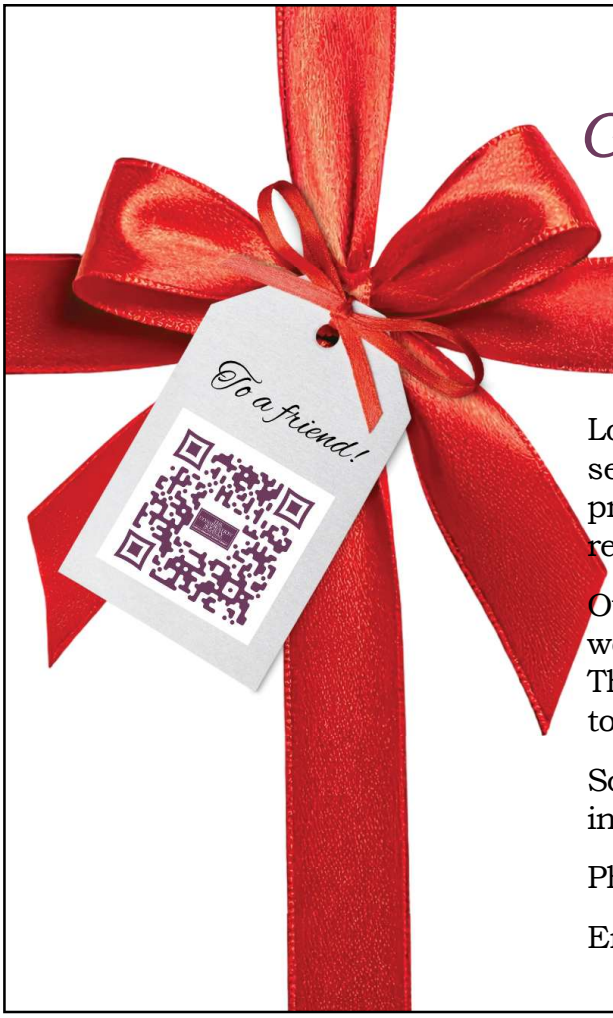
Next up, our members will be decorating gingerbread houses in December, with more events coming after the new year, each one opening another chapter of our city's past.



If you know a young person who is curious about history, architecture, or simply exploring their hometown, we would love to welcome them. Every child who learns why a place matters becomes someone who will help protect it. That is how preservation lasts for another hundred years.

## *Join the Juniors Today!*

Contact the office by phone 210-224-6163 or
Email: JA@saconservation.org




# Give a Gift of Membership!

Looking for a thoughtful gift for your loved ones this holiday season? Give them a gift with a purpose to encourage the preservation of historic buildings, objects, places and customs relating to the history of Texas.

Our members are the heart and soul of our organization, and we would love to have your friends and loved ones join us! This membership comes with great networking, special historic tours, and great volunteering opportunities.

Scan the QR code to join online, or contact the office for further information:

Phone: 210-224-6163

Email: CONSERVE@saconservation.org

# Welcome New Members!

*July 15, 2026 - November 6, 2026*

Aline B. Carter Foundation
David Aguilar
Sylvia Aguilar
Ricardo Alva
Carter Brown
Martin Castillo
Antonio Coffee
Angelica Docog
Brett Elmendorf
Pedro Flores
Kathryn Glast
Madison Iszler
Clarissa Jafarzadeh
George Jaramillo
Jon Jimenez
Timothy Kellcy
Brooks Klutts
Isaac Knott
Catherine Mansell
Christina Mantas
Victoria Martin
Laura Martinez
Lynn McCaine
Esther Olivo
Kayla Perez
James Schelnick
Gina Schiller
Danette Schweers
James Stopher
Ann Stubbs
Klarissa Toca
Adriana Ziga

# MEMORIALS: In Memory Of...

**Rosemary Doyle**
Harvey Penshorn

**Joan & Herb Kelleher**
Ellen McDonough

**Mary Catherine Janssen**
Harvey Penshorn

**JoLynn & Sterling Smith, Sr.**
Jose Castilla III

# HONORARIUMS: In Honor Of...

**Beth Standifird**
Martha Doty Freeman

# Thank You Donors!

*July 15, 2026 - November 6, 2026*

### GOLDEN EGG

Aline B. Carter Foundation

### PRESERVATION CORNER

Carter Brown
Catherine Mansell

### BRICK & MORTAR FRIENDS

Brett Elmendorf
Timothy Kellcy
Danette D. Schweers

### FOUNDATION BUILDER

David Aguilar
Donald Fellers
Irene Kissling

# Recognition of Grants

The Heritage Educations Tours, on behalf of the Society would like to thank H-E-B for their generous grant that has been used towards funding this year's experiences for local fourth grade students!

# Capital Club Donors

### DORIC

Sharon Hendricks

Steve & Marty Hixon Family Foundation

### PILLAR

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Penelope Smith-Singleton

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Virginia Van Steenberg
Mr. & Mrs. Lewis Vetter
Villa Finale Museum & Gardens
David & Lou Williams

THE CONSERVATION SOCIETY OF SAN ANTONIO
MAKING HISTORY BY SAVING HISTORY.

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The Preservation Advocate is published by The Conservation Society of San Antonio. Send letters, articles, or comments to conserve@saconservation.org.

The purpose for which the San Antonio Conservation Society was formed is to preserve and encourage the preservation of historic buildings, objects, places and customs relating to the history of Texas, its natural beauty and all that is admirable and 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.

## *SAVE THE DATES !*

**Thursday, November 19, 2026 at 6:00pm**
Membership Mixer: Presenting the San Antonio Skyline
Hays Street Bridge:
202 Lamar St, 78202

**Thursday, November 26 -**
**Friday, November 27, 2026**
Thanksgiving
Offices will be closed for the holidays

**Friday, November 27,2026 at 5:30pm**
Ford Holiday River Parade Member Viewing Party
$50 per person
511 Villita St, 78205

**Wednesday, December 9, 2026,**
**4:00pm-6:00pm**
Society weihnachtsfeier celebration
The Woman's Club of San Antonio:
1717 San Pedro Ave, 78212

**Thursday, December 24 -**
**Friday, December 25, 2026**
Christmas
Offices will be closed for the holidays

**Friday, January 1, 2027**
New Year's Day
Offices will be closed for the holidays

**Thursday, January 7, 2027 at 6:00pm**
Membership Mixer: Holiday River Barge Tour
$10 Members, $15 Non-Members
Watch your emails for more information

**Wednesday, January 27, 2027 at 5:30pm**
General Membership Meeting
San Antonio Garden Center:
3310 N New Braunfels Ave, 78209

**Thursday, February 18 2027 at 6:00pm**
Membership Mixer: Villa Finale
401 King William, 78204

**Wednesday, February 24, 2027 at 5:30pm**
General Membership Meeting
San Antonio Garden Center:
3310 N New Braunfels Ave, 78209