



AIA San Antonio

May 31, 2006

POSITION

The Main Plaza Redevelopment Project

The San Antonio Chapter of The American Institute of Architects (AIA San Antonio) supports redevelopment of Main Plaza; however, we cannot endorse any specific redevelopment plan at this time for the following reasons:

- The process for public input must be transparent and open, and the public's input, especially that of business stakeholders, should be addressed in the design solutions proposed. To date, the City has not documented public comment either for the public record or to be used as a tool by the design team. Buy-in by the public and area stakeholders is critical to both the long-term success of the project and short-term funding needs.
- Vital street life should be incorporated into the Plaza, possibly allowing automobile and bus traffic with temporary closures for "events" through use of pneumatic bollard systems or similar devices. Such an approach would allow for flexibility and a phased transition from vehicular- to pedestrian-predominant traffic and would let the Plaza grow and change organically.
- Programming of activities and events and management of the operations of Main Plaza and nearby surrounding public spaces should be developed concurrently with the physical design of the space. Without a concerted public and private commitment to management and programming through, for instance, the creation of a Plaza Management Organization, the design should not be finalized.
- The options presented thus far have not adequately married the form of the design with the use of the Plaza as called for during the public input process. In addition, the Bexar County Courthouse, the San Antonio River, the Municipal Plaza Building, and other surrounding buildings that define the Plaza remain less than fully integrated into the Plaza's design and use.

Using the AIA's "Ten Principles for Livable Communities," which can be viewed at http://www.aia.org/liv_principles, as a guide, this historic plaza can return to its intended role as the cultural center of our city.

The AIA San Antonio Chapter prefers the following processes and results:

- The City of San Antonio should tabulate and publish all public input to date and request the Design Team address it in their solution.
- The City of San Antonio should create a public-private not-for-profit development organization to manage the operations of Main Plaza and nearby surrounding public spaces.
- The City should support ALL of the Project for Public Spaces Ten Principles for Creating Successful Squares which can be viewed at: http://www.pps.org/parks_plazas_squares/info/parks_plazas_squares_articles/squares_principles
- The final design should represent a holistic solution of all surrounding interests, structures, and entities which would allow for a beautiful, vibrant, safe, and enriching Main Plaza.