



SAN ANTONIO CONSERVATION SOCIETY

May 6, 2015

STATEMENT

To: Michael Guarino, Chair, and Members,
Historic and Design Review Commission
Re: Agenda Item No. 36 - Case No. 15-2998
114, 130, 134 Soledad Street, 140 E. Houston

The San Antonio Conservation Society continues to be concerned about the proposed destruction of the interior of the Book Building at 140 East Houston Street as a part of this project. The first standard of the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation suggests finding a compatible reuse for an existing historic structure which requires minimal change to its historic fabric. Using a historic building on a prominent street as the pedestrian entrance to a large project in the interior of the block has long been a way to highlight the historic architecture of a community while providing opportunities for major new construction. In this case, by preserving only the exterior walls and not the interior of the Book Building, the experience of being in a historic building, as part of a transition to the new structure, is lost. From what we can determine from the structural engineer's report, the structure is sound and is suitable for reuse. With all of the new square footage proposed, we would hope that a reuse of the interior of the book building would be possible.

In the written statement at the April 15, 2015, meeting we recommended that an archeologist be present if there are ground disturbing activities at the Solo Serve site and observed that the southern wall of the Solo Serve Building has stone remnants of an earlier structure. Since that meeting we have looked again into the history of buildings at that site and recommend that, at minimum Historic American Building Survey Documentation be completed on the surviving portions of pre 20th century building on the site.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sue Ann Pemberton, FAIA
President

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107 KING WILLIAM STREET ❖ SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78204-1312 ❖ 210/224-6163 ❖ FAX: 210/224-6168

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.