

By Ron Nirenberg, Nelson Wolff and Roberto Treviño

Alamo Plaza is perhaps the most important civic space in our city.

San Antonians celebrate our heritage, demonstrate, protest, gather for vigils, watch parades, and conduct presidential politics in the Plaza. Immigrants become new citizens on the Plaza, and our military's officers are commissioned there.

As we pursue needed revitalization to preserve and showcase this sacred site with the proper reverence, the Alamo Plaza must remain at the heart of our civic life.

The still-evolving Alamo plan must preserve public access to this community space. We oppose any type of barrier that that would limit access to Plaza at any time, other than for special events.

A vital part of our heritage is at stake. Even before the legendary 1836 battle, the indigenous and the Spanish colonial mission's grounds and plaza were the center of our community's history.

Today, almost everyone agrees that the current state of Alamo Plaza is unacceptable. The visitor and education experience is underwhelming, and the commercial activities on the Plaza are inappropriate in the context of the heritage and historic battlefield at the site.

So, it is fitting that the City of San Antonio partner with the Texas General Land Office and Alamo Endowment to ensure that the Alamo can continue to define our city's heritage and civic life for the next three hundred years.

While we extend due reverence to those who fought and died at the Battle of the Alamo, we must also recognize the history and tradition embodied in the Plaza.

Some suggest that the Alamo should be a more reverent space, in honor of the many indigenous peoples buried at the site, as well as the defenders of Texas liberty who gave their lives there. We agree.

However, while the complete story should be told and Texas heroes honored, the ultimate design for Alamo Plaza should not try to change its history as a civic space.

It would be a disservice to our community to limit freedom of speech at our state's most recognizable landmark.

Similarly, the Alamo should be welcoming to all who wish to visit. Some cite security as a primary reason to limit access to Alamo Plaza. While sensible precautions should be included in design plans to address safety concerns, ensuring consistent pedestrian access is essential to facilitating the Alamo's role as a public space.

The Archdiocese of San Antonio transferred title of the Alamo property to the City of San Antonio in 1872 on the condition that the Alamo and the plaza remain open for public access.

Additionally, we hope that revised designs attempt to preserve the historic buildings that define that very civic space.

The Alamo Plaza Citizen Advisory Committee, by providing input to the Alamo Management Committee, continues resolving all aspects of the draft interpretive plan including final placement of the restored Cenotaph, location of a new museum and traffic rerouting. These and the many other important decisions will be determined with continued public input and due deliberation.

Closing Alamo Street to daily traffic may ultimately be necessary to accommodate activities and visitors. However, any closure needs to occur thoughtfully and only in the context of a new traffic plan to provide access to the area.

Special attention must also consider the parades. Does the closure of Alamo need to impact routes that would threaten the Battle of Flowers and Fiesta Flambeau parades? This is something that first must be fully investigated and addressed.

We believe that every opportunity to create a solution that allows for the continuation of these traditions should be explored.

In the coming months, the community will continue to be engaged in the design of Alamo Plaza. The Alamo Plaza Advisory Committee will be finding the right balance between tradition and transformation of the area.

We respect their work and look forward to their recommendations to make Alamo Plaza great for Texas and San Antonio.

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