

Panel strains to define 'Alamo Mission Site'



Photos By Tom Reel / San Antonio Express-News

Ripley's Haunted Adventure's "Stumpy" works the Alamo Plaza crowd. The site lies partly in the original mission boundaries.

By Scott Huddleston

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SAN ANTONIO — The city's Alamo Plaza Advisory Committee agreed to use "Alamo Mission Site" to describe the historic space that will be the focus of an Aug. 26 meeting to gather public input.

At least one person on the 21-member panel, which is developing principles for the plaza, felt the phrase was an oxymoron. The word "Alamo" came after the Mission San Antonio de Valero occupied the area from 1724 to 1793.

It was after the mission was secularized that Spanish cavalry troops from Alamo de Parras in Mexico occupied it as a fortress, giving it a name that became legendary after the 1836 siege and battle for Texas independence.

Ramón Vásquez, a committee member and executive director of American Indians of Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions, said “Alamo Mission” is historically inaccurate and confusing.

“There was no Alamo mission,” Vásquez said. “I’m kind of struggling with it now.”

Others in the group said the phrase conveys the importance of Alamo Plaza, once occupied by local Indians in the mission era and the location of some of the heaviest fighting in the 1836 predawn conflict that ended with the deaths of hundreds of Texian, Tejano and Mexican combatants.

“It’s descriptive of what we’re doing now,” in balancing both periods, said Marise McDermott, Witte Museum president and CEO and a chairwoman of the group.

Visitors have struggled to understand that the mission and battle compound occupied land outside of what now is the 4.2-acre Alamo complex owned by the state. Much of it was in the plaza, on land now owned by the city, with the federal government and private interests owning structures on the north and west sides.

The panel’s work will be presented to the City Council later this year to begin a process of hiring a consultant to develop a master plan to be adopted in fall 2015.



The banner features a photograph of a doctor in a blue scrubs attending to a young child in a hospital setting. To the right of the photo, the text reads: "Come be a part of a revolutionary endeavor to establish San Antonio as a landmark for excellence in pediatric care." Below the photo and text are several accreditation logos: "A partnership for advanced pediatric care" with "Children's Health" and "UT kids" logos, "MAGNET RECOGNIZED" by the American Nurses Credentialing Center, and "BEST REGIONAL HOSPITALS" by U.S. News & World Report for San Antonio, TX, 2013-14.





David Oyeleye looks up at the tallest man figure at the Guinness World Record Museum, across from the shrine in Alamo Plaza.

Councilman Diego Bernal, a committee chairman, said he wants to leave the process open to the possibility

of reconstructing parts of the old mission-fortress, though he said other types of interpretation might be more cost-effective.

Bernal said he doesn't want the plan to be so focused on recognizing every culture that played a role in the site's evolution that the symbolic power of the Alamo is lost.

At the Aug. 26 meeting, from 6 to 8 p.m. in Room 103 of the Convention Center, people will be able to give verbal or written comments on the panel's draft goals and guiding principles.

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Guiding principles for draft

1836 is the entry point

Unified leadership under the management of a single steward with a sustainable business model

Preservation and interpretation of evidence-based features

Access: intellectual, experiential and physical

Balance: scholarship, historical context, visitor experience

Sustainability: social, economic and environmental impact

Premier visitor experiences: physical space and interpretation

Embrace the continuum of history, understanding and healing

Connectivity to the river, neighborhoods, La Villita, the cathedral, other plazas

Committee begins work on Alamo vision

University Children's Health Stars



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