

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plaza de Armas is a complex of four historic buildings, owned by the City of San Antonio, that are located on the west side of Military Plaza. The buildings are currently vacant. This report includes a brief history of the buildings and significance of the site, a survey and an assessment of existing conditions, programming and conceptual design for the use of the complex as a Culture and Creative Center, recommendations, a Projected Timeline, a recommended Project Delivery Method and a Preliminary Estimate of Probable Cost.

Scope of Work

The anticipated Scope of work of this project is for the renovation and re-purposing of the historic Plaza de Armas Building complex into a Culture and Creative Center for the City. The specific scope of services for this portion of the project, Part A, included:

- Detailed assessment of and recommendations for the building envelope
- Limited historical research
- Survey of the existing conditions of the buildings and plaza
- Preliminary Architectural Program of the desired uses
- Concept Plans for building uses
- Concept Plans for the Plaza
- Preliminary building code/life safety study

The Challenge

The Plaza de Armas buildings have been owned and occupied by the City of San Antonio since the early 1970's. The complex has provided office and administrative space for a variety of departments, as well as space for a popular Mexican restaurant that was located in the basement level of Building #2. Throughout its ownership the City has struggled to provide a quality working environment for

its employees. One of the challenges of the many remodels and renovations have been the creation of small rabbit-warren like spaces without clear circulation paths or efficient plan organization. Additionally, the renovations have resulted in numerous modifications to the HVAC and Electrical systems, which has led to an inefficient and cobbled together mechanical system. Another challenge has been water penetration into the building through a variety of sources including the skylight, the below grade walls and rising damp through the basement floors. Although a number of studies and attempts to alleviate the results of individual water problems have been attempted, the underlying problem remains.

Methodology

This report looks holistically at the building complex and provides recommendations to ameliorate the challenges. The methodology established by the team was to thoroughly understand the existing conditions and the inter-related correlation of the various systems, buildings and histories. An assessment of the effects of water penetration, structural remodeling, and mechanical system installation on the existing structure was assessed and a systematic evaluation of probable causes was conducted.

A team of experts was assembled to evaluate and assess the existing conditions. An accurate set of architectural and civil engineering drawings that documented existing conditions was created. The building and site were surveyed by CDS/Muery Services, civil engineers, to establish floor elevations, plate lines, floor-to-floor heights and roof lines of all the building. They initiated a three-dimensional building survey of the exterior façade that established elevation heights, wall depth, window openings and dimensions of architectural detailing. CDS/Muery also provided a survey of the site to establish site elevations, locations of man-

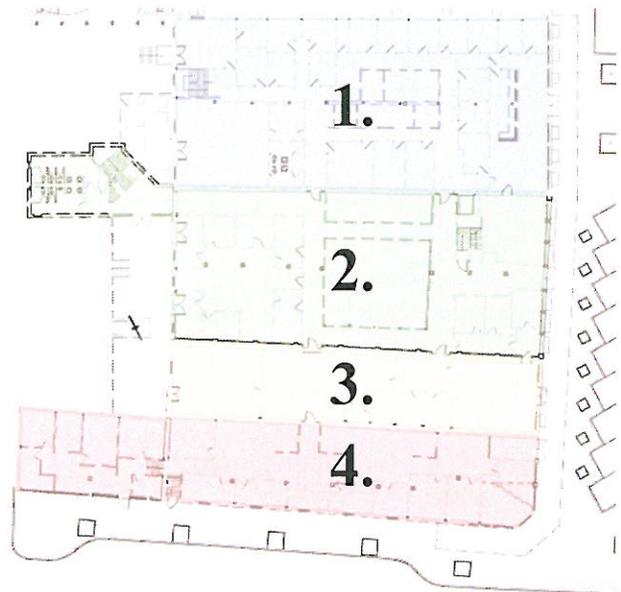
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holes, utilities, services and the relative depth of the San Pedro Creek channel, located immediately west of the site. Alamo Architects field measured the building interior to create an accurate set of architectural drawings. Jaster Quintanilla San Antonio, LLP (JQ), conducted a structural survey and analysis of the existing structural systems and Cleary-Zimmerman Engineers (CZ) provided a survey and assessment of existing mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems. Ann Benson McGlone researched the history and significance of the building complex as well as Military Plaza. Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates (WJE) developed a building envelope assessment. Previous reports on the buildings provided by the City were useful in the evaluation as well as reports from the adjacent, recently renovated Spanish Governors Palace. Geo-technical testing was conducted by Rock Engineering and Testing of the below grade exterior wall condition and footing evaluation was performed by Guido Construction and monitored by Abasolo Archeological Consultants.

Numbering of Buildings for Reference

The Plaza de Armas Building complex is composed of four separate, linked buildings that share common demising walls, a common elevator, mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems as well as an automatic fire sprinkler system. In this report for clarity, the buildings have been numbered – one through four- beginning with the northern most building adjacent to the Spanish Governor’s Palace being Building #1 and the southernmost building adjacent to Dolorosa Street being Building #4.



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Building Assessment

The historic buildings are generally in good condition and if maintained should last another 130 years. Most windows and doors are in excellent condition. The restroom, stair and loading dock additions constructed in the 1970's are in poor condition. There has been water penetration through the skylight/roof, through sub-grade walls and through two of the basement floors. The interior structural framing is in good shape, but should be reinforced to meet current building codes. Exiting paths, and stairway locations are circuitous and confusing. The mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems have been modified over the years reaching the end of their useful life. The existing elevator needs to be replaced, as it currently does not meet current standards or needs.

Building Recommendations

We are recommending that a french drain be placed around the perimeter of the building, the basement walls waterproofed, a vapor barrier be installed below the floor slab of all buildings, removal of all skylights and new roofing installed. The floor framing should be reinforced. New exit stairs and clear paths of travel are recommended, as well as a new 4 stop elevator.

Site Assessment

The Plaza de Armas building complex occupies an important urban site that was once the center of commercial life and activity. Over the years modifications to Military Plaza and the surrounding streets have resulted in a disjointed and unattractive mix of parking, paving and landscaping. West of the site, San Pedro Creek has been neglected and ignored, relegated to a drainage ditch adjacent to a poorly maintained urban alley.

Site Recommendations

We believe that the modifications to the Plaza and site are critical to the success of the proposed uses for the building. We are recommending that park-

a cohesive and attractive design, that could serve both as parking and as a multi-use plaza venue for outdoor events. We are also recommending that the west side of the site be improved with the addition of a new courtyard which will bring natural day light and circulate air into the basement level as well as provide space for outdoor performances and art exhibits. We also believe that the Plaza de Armas should be linked to the courtyard of the Spanish Governor's Palace to take advantage of a beneficial relationship to both sites.

