

ALLIANCE FOR SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS

www.allianceforSAmissions.org
@4SAmissions

October 15, 2015

Shanon Shea Miller <shanon.miller@sanantonio.gov>

Via email

OPEN LETTER TO THE CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Dear Ms. Miller,

This letter introduces the Alliance for San Antonio Missions, a group of neighbors who live and work in the local communities around the four San Antonio Missions on the City's south side.

We are proud that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recently designated the San Antonio Missions a World Heritage site, and we thank you for your important role in securing the designation. We welcome the increased attention that accompanies World Heritage designation, because we understand and appreciate the unique history of the Missions, and their special relationship of built and natural environments. We believe this designation raises awareness of the responsibility to preserve this heritage, for everyone.

The fact is that these global cultural treasures have long been a center of local community life on the Southside. Indeed, World Heritage designation was awarded primarily in recognition of the 'interweaving of cultures' represented by the Missions, and their crucial connection to the San Antonio River Basin.

This is why the Alliance has been formed. Our group includes long-time and newer residents and business owners as well as members of area neighborhood associations and community organizations, all of whom have come together specifically over

common concerns with and hopes for proposals for development in our areas.

We seek to identify consensus while sharpening the understanding of the differences among the existing neighborhoods in the Missions area. The Alliance is organized to be an amplifying voice for our communities. We work collaboratively, as a committee. Our communications are facilitated by a Secretary, a position that rotates among the group.

In an effort to **open a positive, constructive and more public conversation about smart, sustainable development in our communities**, we are reaching out to you and other elected representatives and government agencies, as well as others who have a stake in the preservation and future of the Missions and their environs. At the moment, we do not believe that our local communities have an adequate voice or representation in discussions and decision-making about planning that affects us, first, most directly.

We would like to share our immediate concerns and goals with you:

1) Information. The Alliance is working to help better inform our communities about the many City and other governmental rules, regulations and current policies that are relevant to development around the Missions. As part of this work, we have begun our own series of community roundtables and other informational events. We hope your office will consider joining us at one of these events, and perhaps even assist us in preparing materials that will help our communities better understand the role of the Office of Historic Preservation.

2) Community Preservation. We are calling for the City of San Antonio to revisit its existing guidelines and policies in connection with development *around* the Southside Missions. As a starting point, we think that the Mission Protection Overlay Districts need to be revised with substantial local community involvement. We appreciate the difficulty of this work, but until it is done, we think that development and re-zoning activity around the Missions should be delayed.

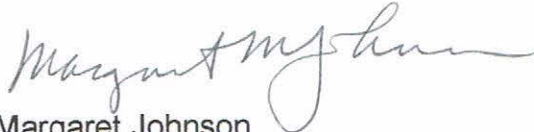
3) Representation. We believe that the Southside Missions area could benefit from the establishment of something like a 'Missions Community Impact District', which would go beyond considering scenic views to grapple with the greater challenges of urban development in this new context of World Heritage designated sites. We have called on the Mayor to convene such an advisory committee, and have requested that our group, as well as the other affected neighborhood associations and community organizations, be invited to participate substantively.

Especially in light of the City's enormous investment in securing World Heritage designation for the San Antonio Missions, and the increased media attention, tourist

traffic and pressure for development that the designation has already brought, we believe that development around the Missions is an urgent subject.

Are you willing to meet with us?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Margaret Johnson".

Margaret Johnson
Secretary
Alliance for San Antonio Missions
info@allianceforSAMissions.org

cc: Claudia Guerra <claudia.guerra@sanantonio.gov>