



EMMA S. BARRIENTOS MEXICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

**REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, June 5, 2013**

The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board convened in a regular meeting at 600 River Street, in Austin, Texas.

Board Members in Attendance:

Juan Oyervides, Chair
Velia Sanchez-Ruiz, Co-Chair
Blanca Valencia, Member
David Carroll, Member
Cassie Smith, Member
Anna Maciel, Member

Board Members Absent: 0

Staff in Attendance:

Herlinda Zamora, ESB-MACC Manager
Laura Esparza, HAND Division Manager

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Oyervides called the Board Meeting to order at 5:35 pm.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Motion to approve the minutes from March 6th was made by Member Carroll with a second by Member Valencia. The motion was passed (5.0) + Chair Oyervides, Co-Chair Sanchez-Ruiz and Members: Smith, Valencia, and Carroll. Motion to approve the minutes from May 1 was made by Member Cassie with a second by Co-Chair Sanchez-Ruiz. The motion was passed (5.0) + Chair Oyervides, Co-Chair Sanchez-Ruiz and Members: Smith, Valencia, and Carroll.
3. **CITIZEN COMMUNICATION:** NONE
4. **STAFF BRIEFINGS:**
 - a. Herlinda Zamora reported on the ESB-MACC facility repairs that included the leaks, which only had one more week before the contractors were complete. Zamora updated the Board on the Awards of Excellence installation, summer camp, June events and rentals. She presented the Austin American Statesman review about Margarita Cabrera's exhibition.
 - b. Laura Esparza briefed the Board on the LAIP, stating that the residents have been selected and include ALTA, Proyecto Teatro, Proyecto Vivo, and Aztlan Dance Company. Performance and rehearsal dates have been confirmed on the calendar. Member Smith asked if they received any applications for visual artists, to which Laura responded no.
5. **PRESENTATIONS:**
 - a. Stephanie McDonald, Waller Creek Conservancy Executive Director presented and updated the board on the progress of the Waller Creek environmental ecological design. McDonald presented the history of Waller Creek, the effects of flooding on the creek, and the formation of Waller Creek Conservancy. She explained that after holding an international design competition, the organization will be asking City Council to adopt the selected design plan and development. The proposed design has a series of five parks starting at the ESB-MACC going up towards 15th Street and Waterloo Park. The parks will increase visibility, be ADA accessible, and connect east

to west and north to south. McDonald stated that the pontoon bridge that will attract more people to the trail from Riverside Drive. Regarding Palm Park, the Conservancy would like to see it become more active. She stated maybe moving the Dougherty Arts Center into Palm Park and having that it be a place that brings families and children together. Community member Paul Saldaña asked how the ESB-MACC will benefit from the TIF tax proposed by Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole for the Waller Creek project and for McDonald to address the misconception that WCC is advocating for the sale of City-owned land to private development in order to fuel the TIF. McDonald stated that they are not getting any revenue from the TIF. She could not speak on the benefit to the ESB-MACC and said they are just in the first steps of planning and have not been in any act of negotiations with anyone along the corridor. Chair Oyervides asked how the project will impact ESB-MACC. McDonald stated that the project will assist the Center with more visitors who will be using the trail. Audience member Paul Saldaña mentioned that the community did not hear anything about acknowledging the history of Palm Park. McDonald expressed that Saldaña's concerns will be incorporated.

b. Kimberly McNeely, PARD Assistant Director's presentation was postponed.

c. Leonard Davila with Crossroads Productions informed the Board that they will be presenting their event next year and thanked the Board for their support.

d. Andy Ramirez with Bellas Artes Alliance thanked the Board for their support and stated that they will be presenting a family friendly, free event next year sponsored by PARD.

e. Andy Ramirez presented on Lot 64 Options and Opportunities. Ramirez presented an idea for a win-win situation that would benefit ESB-MACC and the community. He discussed the history of Rainey Street and how the residents of Rainey lobbied hard to upgrade the zoning to CBD (central business district) which allowed for high density and high rises. Regarding the 64 Rainey St. lot specifically, City Council passed a resolution to stop the sale of the land and asked PARD in turn to ask the stakeholders what they wanted done on lot 64. PARD advised ESB-MACC and City staff that they did not have enough money to even maintain the land, and the resulting revenue from the sale of land would contribute towards the TIF. Ramirez stated that anything built would impede the view of the ESB-MACC. The developers are proposing to construct a 1,200 sq. ft. **space within a 31 story building** that would serve as a restaurant and gallery space. A fountain with an accompanying statue would be included to enhance the view of the ESB-MACC from River St. The Board would be able to choose what the statue would be and they would have stake in the multipurpose building as the income would accrue to the Board for 20 years, rent free. The developer would put up \$100k and portions of the sale of land for funding the fountain and statue. Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole would also contribute \$200k towards the Hispanic Quality of Life. He proposed the creation of a nonprofit so the Board could receive tax deductible donations and contributions. Ramirez also mentioned that 5% of the housing in facility would be for low-mod income families

Chair Oyervides opened Item (6)(c) for discussion and action.

c. **The Board will discuss and take action on Lot 64 Options and Opportunities. (Oyervides, Sanchez)**

i. **Discussion and audience participation took place.**

Board Member Cassie Smith: Member Smith asked Ramirez who asked him to put this presentation together. He stated that the developer and a representative for the developer did, but he had the stipulation that he would only put together a win-win plan for both the developer and ESB-MACC. Member Smith informed Ramirez that one of the Board's biggest questions was how to make the ESB-MACC accessible to everyone, and from his pictures said, "the demographic does not seem like it'd appeal to everyone". Ramirez responded that it's what the Board decides to do with the portal that would determine the audience. Member Smith also said she is glad they thought of affordable housing, **but 5% is a very low percentage.**

Laura Esparza: Esparza clarified to Ramirez that the Advisory Board is appointed by City Council and as such can never become a nonprofit, **or fundraiser**. Cora Wright agreed with Esparza and added that should Ramirez and the developer wish to locate fundraising opportunities they should talk to staff.

David Carroll: Member Carroll questioned the feasibility of having both a gallery and restaurant in 1200 sq. ft. and asked who would be responsible for management, rent, maintenance, etc. Ramirez responded that he could not speak for the developer, but the maintenance is included in the “rent-free” condition. Member Carroll also asked how high the structure and portal would be, to which Ramirez answered 31 floors and 20 feet respectively. Member Carroll also reminded Ramirez of the wastewater line that cannot be built on and the high dollar cost of relocating it.

Cassie Smith: Member Smith noted that there are two more pyramids to be added in the future construction of the ESB-MACC which will be completely blocked. Ramirez stated that anything built will obstruct the view, to which Member Smith responded that if nothing is built at all then the view will not be obstructed.

Juan Oyervides: Chair Oyervides asked what the contingency is in case the lot is sold during the 20 year lease period. Mr. Reese said the lease would not change with ownership; it will stay in place for the full term of the lease.

David Carroll: Member Carroll pointed out that there is a lot to the north and contiguous to 70 Rainey Street that is available. He asked if that could be an option for the developer instead. They also could start construction right away without relocating the wastewater line.

Blanca Valencia: Member Valencia asked Ramirez if there was a stipulation. Ramirez replied that there was no catch.

Community Member’s questions and Comments: (19) votes were “Against” Item (6)(c) and only (1) was “For”.

Peggy Vasquez: Ms. Vasquez asked if they entertained the possibility of leaving 64 Rainey alone and going north to the 70 Rainey lot. Member Carroll restated that by doing so they would save money because they would not have to relocate the waterline.

Jose Urlegas: “No matter what you do with that space, it’s still going to block one of the most important places for our culture. You can never compromise culture. They don’t even live here. This is the heart of our city.”

Juan Cotera: “This started 30 years ago. In 1992 we led a discussion on what the community wanted. It needs to be part of the entrance to the ESB-MACC. It’s always been the view.”

Marta Cotera: “It’s been a lot longer than 30 years and a lot of blood, sweat, and tears went into developing this project. This is the cultural and physical presence of our culture in downtown Austin [...] It’s our memorial here. Everything we’ve gone through for so many centuries now. The Board has an awesome responsibility in their recommendation for not only the future, but the past and all the people who have gone who have contributed their lives and money. It is very insulting to be offered \$200k for the Hispanic Quality of Life. We represent at least a third of the taxpaying community in our city, and for them to offer \$200k that is our due as taxpayers, and is long overdue, is insulting, and the Mayor Pro Tem should take that off the table or she’ll hear a lot about it.”

Dr. Zamora: Asked Mr. Reese if the developer is going to City Council with this proposal at any point, and if they [the community] were going to be put on the defensive again to argue against something outside their control. Mr. Reese did not know the answer to that but said it is a possibility. Zamora responded that it would be unfair to make the community physically go to City Council, outside their own purview, to defend the ESB-MACC.

Skyler T. Bonilla: Bonilla stated that he is a student at ACC representing the Chicanos in Action student group who is researching the community and sees it as under attack. The group will continue talking about this issue because they don’t want to see a blocked view, rather, the recognition and respect of what the community has gone through.

Ms. Austin: As a granddaughter of a WWII hero, being able to attend this meeting helps her understand what her grandparents stood for – a world that stood together. 5% for low income housing is not a solution for people. She questioned why the developer is using Mr. Ramirez as a front man and isn't sitting down with the people himself to work on a solution together. Mr. Ramirez reiterated that his proposal is a concept that can be modified and changed and is not concrete and that it was his recommendation, not anyone else's.

Dr. Rivera: Dr. Rivera **stated** that she is not speaking in the capacity of PARD Board Chair, but as a 30+ year "east austeño". She gave a brief background of her involvement with the Juarez Lincoln Institute and stated, "Despite the efforts of any people in this room, I believe in fighting to save this Center. Will this fight never end? Will we never have this facility safe and sound and in control so we can stop fighting? Will we ever win?"

Gilbert Rivera: Mr. Rivera stated that he has been a lifelong resident in east Austin. He questioned the validity and honesty of the presentation since the developer has an administrative application, which means he is asking for approval without public input. He also questioned the ease of putting a restaurant in 1200 sq. ft and how long the affordable housing will be. I suggest this proposal dies here and now. The community, Board, and Council have taken a stand. Council can find the money to do what they want with that land. To offer us \$200k, we're 38% of Austin's population. We are the majority, we are taxpayers, we control this city. They want to buy us, throwing \$200k at us. It's all about economics. To offer us 1200 sq. ft. for a restaurant and consider that equitable is BS and we know it."

Frank Fuentes: We make decisions with our hearts because we have different definitions of what matters to us. [...] Ultimately, I want to support what this body supports. I will support either way you go, all I wish is for you to look at the facts."

Paul Saldaña: We're repeating history again because even though Council adopted a resolution of October of last year, we're going to continue to have to defend the ESB-MACC over and over again. I'm glad Mr. Reese is here because we offered to talk about how we could coexist, mitigation, and **compatibility standards**. The only conversation they're interested in having is us supporting their request to support their land purchase." Mr. Saldana then discussed the future phases of the ESB-MACC and stated that you would not see a 40-story structure in front of City Hall, the Bob Bullock Museum, or the Capitol. He finished by saying, "I ask the Board to stand firm and adopt yet another resolution where you deny the request and consideration of selling 64 Rainey. [...] We have to leave something for our children so people can understand the rich culture we have here. [...] We have been characterized as being adversarial in this process because we have not caved into the developer's demands, we are people of integrity, and our culture is not for sale."

Dan Arellano: Mr. Arellano, a historian, gave a brief history of the continuous displacement of the Mexican American community since after the Mexican war in 1848, specifically in Austin, stating "the same thing is happening here today."

Gloria Pennington: Ms. Pennington said, "When I think of the proposal it breaks my heart. We'd be hiding the soul of our culture and community, and we don't want to hide it. At my age, I feel like the old Mexican ladies who used to be chaperones to the beautiful señoritas. The ESB-MACC is a beautiful señorita. I am the chaperone that is protecting it from lecherous old men. I would hate to have to go to City Council again, but if it needs to happen so be it." "**Ahí nos vemos!**

Alicia Perez Hodge: "I would ask for [the Board] to call on practicality and common sense and say, 'if this is our home, and the ESB-MACC is our home, would I indeed give away a precious part of it?' For money? It's too important. It may be good for expansion or for showcasing something, but we know enough that it's a contiguous relationship for the ESB-MACC to practically consider it and to keep it for future development as a whole."

Raul Valdez: Mr. Valdez discussed his mural he created at Juarez Lincoln University and the Lucha Libre Cultural Center that was torn down and replaced with an IHOP restaurant after the property was sold to a private developer. He said, "We have to make a stand somewhere for the dignity and integrity of our community. We have very little left, but it's going fast. [...] It's time for us to come together in these opportunities where we defend our rights so we can leave something for our kids."

Juan Cotera: “All the important decisions involve the heart. Before the Council made this land the ESB-MACC by ordinance, there were a lot of people interested in developing it. A real estate developer called me and said this land needs to be used for its highest and best use. My recommendation would be to not build anything major at all. It needs to be the entrance of the ESB-MACC.”

Audience Member: “Mr. Ramirez is an honorable man, but what is at stake here is something that represents my culture. [...] Make sure that whatever decision you make benefits the entire culture, not just the building. This is an important place for our culture. Why is it pulling teeth to get help for such an important thing? [...] We need to protect this facility and put more money into it.”

Board Member David Carroll: Member Carroll restated his point regarding the availability of the **lot North on Rainey St.** especially since it would save the developer money because they wouldn't have to relocate the wastewater line.

Board Member Anna Maciel: Member Maciel asked Mr. Ramirez if he is from here to which he responded that he was raised in east Austin. Member Maciel then talked about her sister who did not accept a \$1 million offer for her house from a condo developer. She said, “What’s important to me is that we stick together as a community and stand up for this cultural center. [...] It’s important to teach our children about the arts and to make sure they have somewhere they can come to learn. It amazes me that anyone would want to come and build a building in front of the ESB-MACC. I’m glad to see everyone here speaking out and protecting the ESB-MACC, so thank you very much.”

Board Member Cassie Smith: “In regards to 5% for affordable housing being economics, this is so much more than economics. I’ve been volunteering here for about 5 years, and I found a home here and have seen the magic that happens in this place. It’s about education and not just for the east Austin community but for people like me who came from out of Austin. To the developer: it’s about community. Austin is growing, and that’s what cities do. [...] I think it’s important to preserve the spaces that we have that are open and where the community can meet.”

Board Member Blanca Valencia: Member Valencia thanked everyone in attendance and said, “It isn’t easy to speak in front of this crowd, but that’s the beautiful thing we get to do – to listen to all stakeholders. And this city is developing so quickly that it is also struggling and striving to preserve culture. There is room for both. There is room for a great economic development where people like Andy can bring these ideas to preserve and enhance culture. It’s more about sitting down and having a dialogue about what is going on. We take all of these comments and advice Council to make sure that dialogue continues in places we don’t have control. We thank everyone for sharing their hearts and ideas.”

Board Chair Juan Oyervides: “[To the developer] I appreciate the fact you came and made those generous offers. That shows me you’re willing to work with our community and our Board. I’m not so sure that’s quite enough. To give away a view of something that’s so obviously close to everybody’s hearts in east Austin... Whatever happens tonight, I just want to say thank you.” Chair Oyervides then brought up the issue of sound in the neighborhood. He stated that the ESB-MACC gets many complaints from neighboring residents and the ESB-MACC never exceeds the City’s ordinance for sound. He recommended that the developer takes that into consideration if they start construction. He closed by saying, “I look forward to being a good neighbor and we appreciate your help and the opportunity to converse with you. [...] After listening to the presentation and the heartfelt sentiments from the community, I would like **to entertain** a motion to reaffirm the resolutions that we previously made to the Board dated October 4, December 6, 2012 and May 1 of 2013.” A motion was made by Member Carroll reaffirming resolutions June 6, 2012, October 4, 2012, December 6, 2012, and May 1, 2013 that were approved by the Board, and to not move forward with Item (6)(c) with a second by Co-Chair Sanchez-Ruiz. The motion was passed (6.0) + Chair Oyervides, Co-Chair Sanchez-Ruiz and Members: Smith, Valencia, Carroll, and Maciel. Motion passes unanimously.

6. BOARD ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION

- a. The Board will discuss and take action on proposed rental, Crossroads Productions. (Smith, Valencia)
 - i. No discussion or vote was made.

- b. The Board will discuss and take action on proposed rental, Belles Artes Alliance. (Sanchez-Ruiz, Carroll)
 - i. No discussion or vote was made.
- d. The board will discuss and take action on refining 64 Rainey Street vision. (Smith, Oyervides)
 - i. Co-Chair Sanchez-Ruiz discussed the importance of curb appeal that would be compatible to the architecture of ESB-MACC, and to include local artists like Luis Valdez.
 - ii. Laura Esparza suggested a Pocket Park that would include sculpture, landscaping and educational programming.
 - iii. The Board agreed on a Pocket Park that would recognize the historical Rainey Street that would also include artworks and an assembly spaced programmed by ESB-MACC. A motion was made by Member Smith to approve the Pocket Park with a second by Member Valencia. The motion was passed unanimously (6.0) + Chair Oyervides, Co-Chair Sanchez-Ruiz and Members: Smith, Valencia, Carroll, and Maciel.
- e. The Board will discuss and take action on parking issues. (Smith, Valencia)
 - i. No discussion.
- f. The Board will discuss and take action on LARP issues. (Smith, Carroll)
 - i. No discussion.
- g. The Board will discuss and take action on FY2014 budget issues. (Oyervides, Sanchez-Ruiz)
 - i. Laura Esparza explained that the van did not move forward and that CMC (Central Maintenance Center) needed more vehicles.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

ADJOURNMENT

Oyervides adjourned the meeting at 9:10 pm with a motion from Co-Chair Sanchez-Ruiz and a second from Member Smith without objection (6.0). + Chair Oyervides, Co-Chair Sanchez-Ruiz and Members Smith, Valencia, Carroll, and Maciel.