



For Immediate Release:

June 29, 2016

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Alamo Master Plan Launches Archaeology Study of Alamo Grounds

Work is first step in effort to 'Reimagine the Alamo'

(SAN ANTONIO, TX) – With a “dream team” of historic preservation and master planning experts now in place, the Alamo master plan Management Committee is launching the research and discovery phase of work that will involve a systematic archaeological study of the Alamo complex grounds, the first such study of its kind to be completed on the site.

The purpose of the work is to determine the location of the structural limits of the compound’s walls and how the landscape of the site has shifted over time. In particular, the archaeologists hope to identify the exact location of the south and west walls of the Alamo. Answering these preliminary questions is essential to the authenticity and integrity of the master plan.

“We have to rediscover the Alamo before we can reimagine the Alamo,” said Gene Powell, Alamo Endowment Board Member and Chairman of the Alamo Management Committee. “People have perhaps been operating under the assumption that we know all there is to know about the site and that’s just not the case. We think we know where most of the structures were located, but if we’re going to produce a master plan that is worthy of the World Heritage designation that the Alamo and the other four missions received, we must learn as much as we can before we put pencil to paper.”

The Alamo Management Committee, which consists of two representatives each from the City of San Antonio, the Texas General Land Office and the Alamo Endowment, selected Preservation Design Partnership (PDP) in March to lead the master planning effort after an extensive search process that included review of more than 250 firms and individuals from across the United States and around the world. The Alamo Executive Committee, comprised of Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush and San Antonio Mayor Ivy R. Taylor, ratified the Management Committee’s recommendation.

“In order to properly honor the Alamo’s history, we must know the details of its origins,” said Commissioner Bush. “The re-imagination of the Alamo Complex involves careful study of the grounds so that we properly envision its future. This extraordinary master plan process now includes a comprehensive archaeological investigation to help guide us in reimagining the Alamo experience.”

The principals of PDP have over 20 years of experience in heritage planning, design and architecture on iconic U.S. projects including Independence Hall, the U.S. Supreme Court and the Virginia State Capitol. Led by nationally recognized thought leader, architect and planner, Dr. George Skarmas, and Managing Principal and preservation architect, Dominique Hawkins, PDP is working in collaboration with San Antonio-based Fisher Heck Architects, Grupo De Diseño Urbano and more than a dozen other consultants who are experts in their respective areas of heritage planning and design to develop a visionary approach to the master plan, one that tells the entire 300-year history of the site.

“There are centuries of stories connected with the Alamo and its grounds,” said San Antonio Mayor Ivy R. Taylor. “People visit the Alamo every day without ever realizing what they are, and we are determined to change that. This master planning process will make it possible to tell the story of the Alamo, and of San Antonio, so much more fully and in a way that has never been done before.”

As part of the public engagement effort, the Alamo master plan is also launching a new website, ReimagineTheAlamo.org, as well as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#) pages to help the public stay informed as discoveries are made and the master planning work progresses. There will also be a series of public engagement sessions, beginning with the first on Tuesday, August 2, 2016 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

The archaeology work is slated to begin on July 5. It is expected to take approximately three to four weeks and will involve periodic lane closures on Alamo Street and Houston Street. The archaeologists will brief the public at 10:30 a.m. each day to explain what they are doing and answer questions from visitors. The archaeological team will be led by Nesta Anderson, PhD, with Pape-Dawson Engineers. Dr. Anderson will work with City of San Antonio Archeologist Kay Hinds; Jake Ivey; Steve Tomka, PhD; Shawn Marceaux, PhD; and Mary Jo Galindo, PhD.

"It is an honor and a privilege to serve as a member of the Alamo Management Committee, representing the City of San Antonio," said Councilman Roberto Treviño. "Since October of 2015, our work has been primarily to identify and hire the best experts in the world who will help us honor and showcase the Alamo and its surroundings in the most significant way possible. And now the actual work begins – sifting through layers of earth will help unveil layers of history at the Alamo so all of its stories can be told."

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