



## For Immediate Release

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### ***HemisFair Transformation Begins***

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS (APRIL 20, 2012) — Mayor Julian Castro joined HemisFair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation (HPARC) CEO Andres Andujar and Board President Madison Smith in showing off the first visible sign of HemisFair’s transformation. The historic restoration of the “Eagar Complex” on South Alamo “marks an important step in our redevelopment timeline,” says Andujar. “This is the first tangible brick-and-mortar project and will set the standard for the quality of preservation and construction at HemisFair.”

In 1962, U.S. Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez and future HemisFair ’68 CEO William Sinkin discussed the possibility of celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of San Antonio with a World’s Fair. Through a combination of private donations, municipal bonds, state and federal funding, San Antonio opened the gates of HemisFair on April 6, 1968.

The 1968 HemisFair created jobs, economic spillover, and a wave of energy that the city had never before experienced. However, modernizing efforts executed thereafter lacked cohesive design and failed to connect the area to the surrounding neighborhoods. As a result, the majority of this centrally located space has been isolated and underutilized for over forty years.

In recent years, due to overwhelming public support for revitalizing HemisFair, the HemisFair Park Area Master Plan was developed and approved by City Council. The Plan outlines several principles and planning concepts that include:

- Develop a world-class urban park surrounded by vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood including cultural/civic, retail, restaurant and housing
- Bring historic buildings back to life to play a vital role in the present
- Reconnect the park to the surrounding neighborhoods
- Adopt and maintain responsible sustainability practices

HPARC will execute the Plan in preparation for HemisFair’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the City’s 300<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 2018. HemisFair projects are included in the 2012 Bond, including \$15 million to reinstate historic streets, and \$15 million to restore historic structures, create a world-class play environment, and design a new civic park. Early voting begins April 30.

#### **Eagar Complex Restoration**

Setting the stage for HemisFair’s transformation, the Master Plan’s guiding principles are emphasized in every aspect of the Eagar Complex Restoration. Ron Schappaugh, *Project Manager*, describes the scope of work as “complete restoration of period detailing, including

**Eagar Complex Restoration**  
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determining original paint colors, replacing window panes, and sourcing matching wood trim elements.” Additionally, adjusting the interior environment to meet current standards requires mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work. “Once finished, the space will be activated as a uniquely-landscaped public courtyard surrounded by charming, antique buildings.”

The Eagar House is a one-story, limestone structure built in 1870 by John H. Kampmann. Two other historic buildings also involved in this project are the Eagar Dependency and the Hermann Carriage House. The architect for the project is Ford Powell & Carson, the general contractor is J.C. Stoddard Construction, and the landscaping consultant is TBG Partners.

**History of the Eagar House**

Irish-American merchant Wilson Irvine Riddle and his new bride Elizabeth Menefee arrived from Tennessee in 1841 to set up a store near the corner of Commerce and St. Mary’s Streets. Shortly after the Republic of Texas was admitted into the Union as the 28<sup>th</sup> state, Wilson enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in the Mexican-American War. The territorial war with Mexico took its toll on Texas settlers. Wilson was captured and imprisoned in Mexico for one year. While he was eventually returned to Texas, the hardships of forced labor and long march home ultimately caused Wilson’s death in 1847. His extensive land holdings then passed to his wife, who in turn left most of the property to her children, James Wilson and Sarah Riddle Eagar.

Sarah Eagar was among the Republic’s longest surviving residents of San Antonio, and lived in the home on South Alamo until her death in 1947. Even after her husband Robert died in 1893, Sarah continued to actively participate in social and business engagements until the end of her life. Her expansive ownership of acreage gave her a strong voice in the city’s commercial expansion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Sarah and her daughter Florence were among the first women in San Antonio to try to preserve the Alamo, and both acted as its custodians at different times. Sarah’s granddaughter Aline Badger Carter was a noted philanthropist and was awarded Poet Laureate of Texas from 1947 to 1949.

Years later, Sarah’s widowed daughter Florence Eagar Roberts celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and lived in the house until 1967. The Urban Renewal Agency eventually acquired the property for \$39,500 to house the Southern Baptist Exhibit during the 1968 HemisFair.

Credits: Historic report on the Eagar House and Carriage House, UTSA archives and collections: URL:  
<http://libguides.utsa.edu/HemisFair68>

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