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MUSEUMS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The City of El Paso Hispanic Cultural Center Subcommittee
Wednesday August 19, 2015 – 1:00 p.m.
City Hall, Main Conference Room

MINUTES

- 1. **Call to Order.** Meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.
- 2. **Roll Call.**

<u>Board Member</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Rafael Adame	X	
Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado		X
Ruben Chavez	X	
Yolanda Clay	X	
Luis Cortinas	X	
Fermin Dorado	X	
Jaime Esparza	X	
Rosa Guerrero	X	
Hector Gutierrez	X	
Carlos Hisa		X
Enrique Moreno	X	
Barbara Perez	X	
Cindy Ramos-Davidson		X
Gustavo Reveles		X
Silvestre Reyes	X	
Belen Robles	X	
Maya Sanchez	X	
Nestor Valencia	X	
Theresa Ware-Asbury	X	

Others present: Ben Fyffe, Kristen Hamilton-Karam and Misty Monteros

- 3. **Public Comment.** The following members of the public commented: Marilyn Guida, Corinne Chacon, Analinda Moreno, Alex Mares and Claudia Rivers.
- 4. **Discussion and Action on Approval of Minutes for July 15, 2015.** Chair allowed members time to review the minutes before requesting a motion for approval. Luis Cortinas so moved; Congressman Silvestre Reyes seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously.
- 5. **Presentation on Community Archiving as a Potential Service to be Offered Within the Cultural Center.** Chair explained that a group came to him to talk about the importance of archiving documents, what the situation is in El Paso and the importance the Center could serve. Mark Cioc-Ortega, a historian by profession, and Miguel Juarez, a doctoral student in History, spoke of an archival issue in the city. Mark Cioc-Ortega noted we have some of the most poorly kept records in any city he has ever worked in. The missing element by far in all of the records is material on the Mexican-American community. In thinking about the cultural center, he mentioned that a large component is the community archives and when one is looking for materials, when you can locate the family or group that has them, they can be brought in to be photocopied or digitized and returned to the family without the need to keep the material. The collection of materials would develop over time and would be incredibly valuable for understanding local history. Miguel Juarez reiterated there needs to be a space accessible to the community, where people can donate and review materials. These materials should be available to students and scholars for research, as there is great interest in El Paso. Mark added that it sounds very

expensive to create such a center, but it doesn't have to be. It can start as a very modest enterprise and it can grow over time as grants and other monies come in. It can be built into a larger frame and hopefully a super archive can be created in which the materials are held under the conditions in which they should be and all the materials can be digitized. Enrique Moreno asked what type of resources he would have to complete research on individuals that have contributed in significant ways to our community if he was a graduate student, and Miguel replied that oral histories are available, however they are primarily with the families; reiterating that is why this center is needed, as a means to consolidate everything. Claudia Rivers added that UTEP is designated by the Texas State Library and Archives as a regional historical resources depository, noting that official records of historical value are transferred to them by government agencies. She said that space is limited and the state does not provide financial support to process any of the records. Congressman Silvestre Reyes asked if the Holocaust Museum had an archive, and Mark replied they have a study center with a small archive. The Congressman noted that the Border Patrol Museum also has an excellent archive. Yolanda Clay asked Mark what a small archive office would look like and what equipment would be needed. Mark replied that was a hard question to answer because a small room could be used to get it off the ground, but the expenses come when you begin to digitize because a single copy machine is \$35,000. Miguel noted that many archives start very small and grow over time based on funding, staffing, space and technology needs. Mark noted this is the type of project that attracts grants. Luis Cortinas asked Ben what the City is providing and Ben reminded the subcommittee that due to the voters approving the Quality of Life bond, we've just spent \$3M on an innovative digital archiving project specific to photography and digitizing the community's family records and stories at the History Museum, called the Digital Wall. There are mobile stations throughout the districts, kiosks and a full-time curator of the Wall, who is available to assist the public.

6. Staff Report. Bryan Crowe with Destination El Paso addressed some of the questions that were raised in the previous meeting regarding the Abraham Chavez Theatre. One of the questions was in regards to the naming of the facility and whether there was a contract for naming rights to the theatre; he responded that to his knowledge there was not a contract for naming rights to the facility, mentioning the name was likely designated and approved by Council as that is typically how public assets receive their names. There was a question about privatization of the Abraham Chavez Theatre and when that began; that began in March of 1998 and has been under private management since then. There were questions regarding the term of that agreement; the term currently runs through 2020. There was another question about the ability to break the contract or change the scope of work and such; the contract with the management organization will not be a roadblock for the decision on future use of the Abraham Chavez Theatre, it is entirely negotiable. There were questions about revenue and utilization of the facility; he followed with some numbers: 2012 revenue - \$458,569, 2013 revenue - \$387,928, 2014 revenue - \$537,826, revenue YTD for fiscal year 2015 through June 30 - \$660,732. With respect to utilization; 2012 - 66,378 ticketed guests through the facility, 2013 - 55,714 ticketed guests through the facility, 2014 - 68,068 ticketed guests through the facility, ticketed guests through the facility YTD for fiscal year 2015 through June 30 - 79,364. Bryan continued with additional information, noting there was conversation about the utilization of the Abraham Chavez Theatre: through year-end 2014, Pollstar, an international ranking organization for public assembly facility, which includes theatres, ranked the Plaza Theatre 114 worldwide for utilization and the Abraham Chavez Theatre ranked 128 with both venues ranked in the top 200 of facilities throughout the world. Another ranking based in the state of Texas by Venues Today ranks the Plaza Theatre number 2 in the state and the Abraham Chavez Theatre ranks number 3. With respect to asbestos at Abraham Chavez Theatre, there are materials tests that indicate where asbestos is throughout the building, but Bryan has not seen a full cost-out of what abatement would be for the theatre. The assumption is it would be significant just based on the time of construction; it's very unique and the asbestos materials would be in almost every possible surface of the building, to include wall coatings, under carpeting, plumbing areas, electrical infrastructure and it is considered to be extensive. For purposes of renovating the facility, anything that would be touched or disturbed would have to be abated. There was a question regarding the cost of renovations at the Abraham Chavez Theatre; the City's current estimate for renovation not including abatement, is \$26M. Bryan concluded his report and opened the floor for questions.

Enrique Moreno noted that specific questions were asked about costs associated with operating expenses at the previous meeting. Bryan replied that the venue is operated as part of a complex that includes the Convention Center, the Abraham Chavez Theatre and the Plaza Theatre. From a technical standpoint, the Abraham Chavez Theatre is a room in the Convention Center; it relies upon the Convention Center for mechanical, electrical and plumbing system support - the building cannot operate independently of the rest of the campus. Because of that, expenditures are not tracked on a 'room by room' basis. In terms of operating, the estimate is \$800,000 annually. Hector Gutierrez asked what happened in 2015 that caused the mid-figure to be about \$200,00 above what the average was for the previous 3 years, and Bryan clarified he was talking about fiscal years, so the mid-figure Hector referred to was actually month 10 of 12 months. Hector noted it was still about \$200,000 above and Bryan explained that utilization was higher at Abraham Chavez this year due to hosting the US Bowling Congress for a good portion of the year in the Convention Center, so some activities that would have gone to the Convention Center were serviced out of Abraham Chavez. Hector continued to ask if there was a way for the committee to obtain a copy of the estimate

to renovate the Abraham Chavez Theatre, which Bryan had noted would be around \$26M; Bryan replied affirmatively. Fermin Dorado asked if the \$26M renovation cost was just to bring the Abraham Chavez Theatre up to par, and Bryan replied the cost was to fully restore the facility to a 2,500 seat performing arts facility, not inclusive of abatement costs. Barbara Perez asked where the renovation estimate came from, and Bryan replied there was a cost estimate done on what it would cost to renovate and modernize the facility, and that was escalated through current 2015 dollars. Nestor Valencia asked who prepared the estimate; Bryan replied an analysis was completed in 2007 by an architectural firm when the City was considering renovating the facility. Chair noted he was under the impression that the theatre itself was operated at a loss in comparison to the other facilities; Bryan replied that the entire complex is operated as one entity that has an operating subsidy on an annual basis of about \$1.35M a year, so generally speaking, the facilities don't generate revenue. Bryan went on to say that the theatre is currently operating at a loss. Chair continued to ask if Bryan thought that the Abraham Chavez Theatre was operated at a greater loss than the other facilities; Bryan replied no, he didn't think it was greater than, but rather on par with the other facilities. Enrique Moreno asked if there is a matter of an acute nature or any condition at the Abraham Chavez Theatre requiring immediate attention that would impair its ability to function within a short time period; Bryan replied that the theatre has immediate needs, such as ADA standards that must be met, building codes and many other unique elements that are involved with any renovation for the facility. Enrique Moreno requested that the information requested by the group be provided to Nestor Valencia's working group so they have time to evaluate and analyze it before the group meets again. Ralph Adame asked Bryan if he was trying to talk members out of recommending the Abraham Chavez Theatre, noting he suspected there was an agenda as all he presented was 'doom and gloom'. Bryan replied he was trying to be cautious in how he presented the information so as not to sway the group's decision in any manner, but he felt it was important the group have access to information that is known. Ben Fyffe added that he credited Barbara Perez with asking a lot of these questions at the last meeting in an effort to have a better world-view of the recommendation before it is made. Barbara noted that she has dealt with asbestos before and it is very costly and if you continue to build without following the rules, the EPA is very deadly. Chair asked if Bryan was aware of any renovation, repair, improvements or anything to improve the theatre so that it can keep operating. Bryan replied there is a capital program that generally includes some improvements to Abraham Chavez; for the most part they are required improvements that have to be done to make it into the next day. The long-term plan is something that has been discussed both publically and within the City administration for a great deal of time. The continuous operation of Abraham Chavez is going to require investment, whether it is to operate it as a performing arts venue or in a different form or fashion.

Ben Fyffe began his report, noting that working group #2 suggested looking into the main branch of the El Paso Public Library during the June meeting. Members were given a handout that had a photo of the new addition to the library and on the reverse, some information related to why this could potentially be a good site to consider for municipal repurpose (attached here as part of these minutes). Ben noted the library facility itself is just over 100,000 square feet, including the original structure of 65,000 square feet and the addition built in 2006 of 36,000 square feet. This is located in a very high-traffic area of the state-designated Downtown Arts District. The Abraham Chavez Theatre is also located in the Downtown Arts District, so both facilities have that benefit. The square footage of the library addition itself is not really utilized, and is, in fact, the most underutilized branch in the system. The square footage is almost exactly the size that has been recommended by both groups #1 and #2. It does have a 250-seat auditorium that could potentially be upgraded or repurposed as a more state-of-the-art performance space. It has close proximity to 2 parking garages, a lot of street parking, and it is also on significant public transit lines, including the new BRIO station and a streetcar station will be there as well as a bike share station. Siting on Cleveland Square allows for a longer engagement with school groups, as one thing we have heard consistently throughout this process from subcommittee members and the public is the idea of engaging our youth and our students. Being able to have that green space in front of a facility is very important for school groups because it means they can stay longer and eat lunch while spending time outside the facility, so there is an added benefit. He noted that baseline operations are already in the City budget, and potential for programmatic and festival/event partnerships exists on this site. He added that the library is run 7 days a week, so those operations are already absorbed into the City's general fund. Ben opened the floor for questions.

Hector Gutierrez inquired about the original date the library was built, and Ben replied that the main building was built in the 1950's and the addition was built in 2006. Hector asked if there were asbestos issues at the library, and Ben replied there were none. If there were any, it would have been addressed in 2006 when the addition was built. Luis Cortinas noted that the subcommittee had spent a tremendous amount of time on the Abraham Chavez Theatre and noted the group was designed to look at several buildings, not just one. Luis thanked Ben for bringing another building possibility into the fold and mentioned it did not seem feasible to use the Abraham Chavez Theatre due to the millions of dollars in renovations that would be required. Enrique Moreno disagreed, and asked if an analysis has been completed on what it would cost the City of El Paso to create a new public library. Ben replied that the most feasible solution would be to partition the addition in the existing building, while the original structure remained as a branch. Yolanda Clay asked if this was the least-used branch, and Ben replied affirmatively. Ruben Chavez asked if the need identified in 2006 as part of a bond to expand the library has gone away, or if it was needlessly expanded; Ben replied that creating the Museum of History and expanding

the library were seen as sister projects to repurpose Cleveland Square and create 2 spaces that could function together to draw more people because they were in close proximity. He noted that has not necessarily happened in terms of performance at this time. Ruben acknowledged a need for a children's museum and asked if there had been any discussion for that; Ben replied there had not. Enrique Moreno expressed that Ben seemed to be an advocate for this and less so somebody that is just providing information. He asked if that was Ben's role and Ben replied he was just explaining the benefits of this space as it was recommended by working group #2. Enrique asked for clarification on this possibility, asking if the cultural center would be a 'wing' of what is now the museum. Ben replied that would be part of the recommendations the group would need to make and noted it could be partitioned off to make it a completely separate facility, or they could work together. He reiterated this was something that was recommended by group #2 and there has not been time to really discuss this because so much of the discussion over the last 2 meetings has been on the Abraham Chavez Theatre. He added that he did promise during the June meeting to come back with information about this in terms of what this could be or could look like, so that is why it is being discussed now. Barbara Perez noted that just because 30,000 square feet was the recommendation, doesn't mean the group has to stay at 30,000 square feet. She asked if keeping the entire 101,000 square feet and building a library somewhere else would be a possibility; Ben replied that could be a recommendation and something that Council could decide. Nestor Valencia noted he did not recall his group recommending anything under 40,000 square feet and expressed at this point it may be necessary to get engineers, architects and other technical help to look at the figures and issues to come to some preliminary conclusions before the group continues to present to Council. Hector Gutierrez recommended a report be made to Council in October and that special meetings be called in order to meet the group's deadline. Chair referred to Ben's handout and noted it was clear that the addition to the library had all the benefits described, but feels the Abraham Chavez Theatre contained many of the same benefits. Mayor Maya Sanchez expressed her frustration with how the subcommittee is moving forward, noting that so much time is being spent on specific locations and she read aloud what the group is tasked to do, per the resolution. She apologized for being upset, but reiterated her frustration at not addressing what the group was tasked to do because the focus is on location. She stressed that if the presentation is to be made by October, they need to start focusing on the other items that are of importance. Hector Gutierrez expressed his agreement with Mayor Sanchez. Yolanda Clay pointed out that while baseline operations are already in the City budget for the library location, the same is not true for the Abraham Chavez Theatre location. Ruben Chavez expressed his opinion that programming would dictate the size of the cultural center, noting that building a 101,000 square feet building without knowing the programming could kill the center very quickly.

7. Report on Progress of Working Group #1 (Size). *Item was tabled until further notice.*

8. Report on Progress of Working Group #2 (Budget). Ralph Adame provided members with a handout of the group's recommendations for the center (attached here as part of these minutes). He noted the group recommends ± 30,000 square feet for renovations. There must be room for parking, there must be a gallery, a performance theater that seats a minimum of 750 people, the stage must be adaptable (Black Box) in order to host more than one type of performance, there must be workshops and classrooms with the ability to be compartmentalized so that rooms can be moved around to fit different sized audiences, there must be an outdoor performance space and commitment from the City beyond what is being called for now in the creation and sustainment of the venue. Ralph opened the floor for questions, there were none, and he concluded his report.

9. Report on Progress of Working Group #3 (Fundraising). Barbara Perez presented the report of working group #3 via a PowerPoint presentation, and explained that the group recommends the development of a fundraising plan to help support the Hispanic Cultural Center. Tools and assets the group needs to work with have been evaluated and they are in the process of developing a list of fundraising vehicles to access once approval is given to proceed with their recommendations. A fully adopted mission statement, value statement and programs of the center are needed in order to demonstrate to the outside world they are organized and ready to ask for money. Step one is to define the big picture of the fundraising plan; step two is to assess the resources already available, which is the \$5.7M from the bond, existing market studies, creation of a donor list that capitalizes on each subcommittee member's expertise and connections, fundraising strategies that have been used in the past, currently existing and/or needed fundraising structure, and evaluation tools already in place for donor stewardship that might be used from other City-funded projects to measure success; step three is to identify the group's fundraising goal; step four involves determining the resources already available and what is needed to get organized to raise funds; step five requires full subcommittee involvement to set goals and get recommendations on a diverse board of directors for the proposed center; step six is choosing the right combination of fundraising vehicles to be used for the overall fundraising strategy; step seven is identifying fundraising markets to potentially include individual donors, affinity groups, corporations, foundations and government; step eight is budgeting fundraising efforts to meet goals effectively and fulfill the mission; step nine is drafting the plan; and step ten is implementing the plan by respecting diversity, gaining insight, providing checks and balances and putting the plan into action. Barbara opened the floor for questions, there were none, and she concluded her report.

10. Discussion and Action on Final Report Outline. Ben Fyffe briefly reviewed the outline of what a potential report structure could look like to include a subcommittee roster, an introduction, duty recommendations, a

conclusion, and an appendix that would include working group rosters, working group reports, survey tools and results that were utilized throughout this process, and a list of all public groups/members who have spoken to the subcommittee or provided input. Chair suggested that he work with the Vice-Chair on a draft final report using the reports from each working group and call an additional meeting the week before the regularly scheduled one to meet and review the draft report for discussion. Chair noted he would get the draft report out to the group before the additional meeting for full discussion with no commitment. Chair asked for a motion to allow Chair and Vice-Chair to prepare a draft report for the additional meeting. Ralph Adame so moved; Yolanda Clay seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously.

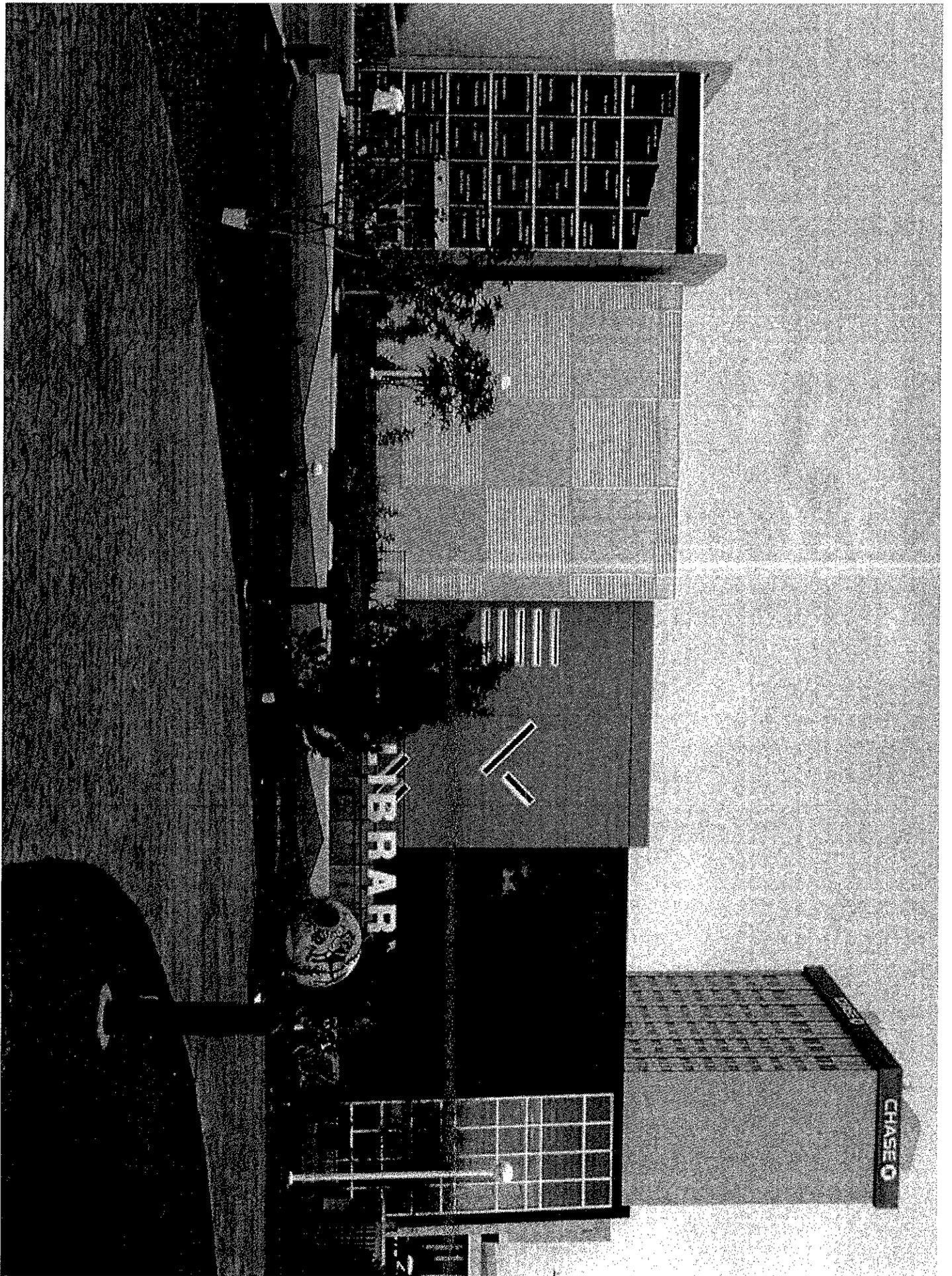
11. New Business. None at this time.

12. Adjournment. Chair requested a motion to adjourn. Luis Cortinas moved to adjourn; Nestor Valencia seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 3:08pm. Next meeting scheduled for September 10, 2015.

Approved for content by:
Jaime Esparza, Chair

Respectfully submitted by:
Misty Monteros, Administrative Assistant
Museums & Cultural Affairs Department

CITY CLERK DEPT.
2015 SEP 10 PM 5:04



101,000 sq ft

Original structure of 65,000 sq ft and addition of 36,000 sq ft

1. Located in high traffic area of State-designated Downtown Arts District
2. Square footage of addition is almost exactly size being recommended by working groups 1 & 2 with a 250-seat venue that could be upgraded
3. Close proximity to two parking garages, street parking and with new public transit options
4. Siting on Cleveland Square allows for longer engagement with school groups
5. Baseline operations already in City Budget
6. Potential for programmatic partnerships with El Paso Museum of History & the Digital Wall and the Border Heritage Collection and upcoming ArtSpace El Paso
7. Potential for festival/event partnership as site lies in footprint of almost every major downtown festival

City of El Paso Hispanic Cultural Center Subcommittee
August 19, 2015

Group 2 - Recommendation for a Mexican American Center

- Downtown Center with ± 30,000 Square Feet for renovation
- Parking
- Gallery
- Performance Theater – 750 Seat minimum
- Adaptable (Black Box)
- Workshops/Classrooms/Compartments
- Outdoor Performance Space
- City Collaboration – City Project need additional investment