

# Save the viewshed from the iconic Hays Street Bridge

Kristel A. Orta-Puente

*Previously published in the Express-News on Dec. 11, 2017.* As a local ethnographic photographer that photographs buildings in San Antonio, I feel a responsibility to get involved in saving structures and views that have historical significance. Developers Mitch Meyer and Alamo Beer owner Eugene Simor are building a 4 story mixed-use apartment complex that will block the best full view of the Hays Street Bridge, a local and national historical landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places. During the first and only community meeting to discuss the complex at the Alamo Beer Co. last week, Simor and his team made it clear that despite pending Texas Supreme Court litigation and the very vocal opposition of many San Antonio residents, this development was moving forward. The photo I took this on 8/17, it highlights the entire structure of the Hays Street Bridge from the best perspective left available to capture the entire bridge that includes our iconic San Antonio cityscape. This exact location happens to be within the middle of where the 4 story complex would be built, a location that is currently within the chain link fence installed by Eugene Simor and company.

A little engineering history in regards to why a Hays St. Bridge complete viewshed is important... *the bridge itself is originally constructed by the Phoenix Bridge Co., connecting Eastside and Downtown...in 1910...The Hays Street Bridge utilizes... The Pratt design...(which) is part of the wing design for the first successful Wright Brothers airplane. The Pratt truss of the bridge spans 130 feet, and the Murphy-Whipple (same construction used to construct the Eiffel*

*Tower) is 225 feet...It is actually these two styles of bridges originally built in 1880 and reconstructed together at its current location in 1910.-cited from the American Society of Civil Engineers and the San Antonio Express News.*

***Viewshed is the geographical area that is visible from a location including all surrounding points that are in view within that location.***

An example of the magnitude of ignoring viewshed is the Pearl Brewery development. While its "activation" is considered a success by developers, the 10-story building and surrounding development dwarf the once dramatic view that could be seen from every direction. We don't often see the jewel in the rough until someone comes along and sheds light of the beauty in plain sight. The Bridge has become an iconic location shown in countless advertisements, in engagement photos, in police department promotions, in the rebranding of San Antonio video and as one of the top Instagrammed locations in San Antonio. Can you imagine this location with a park in the foreground featuring a local artist installation, a lighted walking trail around the park, a dog park, and a restroom facility like the new one downtown? Mr. Simor mentioned the homeless (or what he calls urban campers) will be eliminated by diversifying the Eastside with more upper class residents in this complex. How you solve homelessness issues are not by installing fences or committing cultural suicide with the noose of rapid overdevelopment, but rather looking at historically ignored social

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Photo: Kristel A. Orta-Puente

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Nielsen's decision means that there are now about 200,000 Salvadorans who will become undocumented and run the risk of deportation if they do not return to El Salvador by Sept. 9, 2019. They are being thrown to the wind to find their fate in a country that cannot support this massive level of new arrivals. In the mix, of course, is the uncertain future of their nearly 193,000 U.S.-born children.

The impact of the termination of TPS designation for Salvadorans hits close to home. Texas with more than 36,000 Salvadorans with TPS designation has the second largest population behind California. Among U.S. cities, Houston has the third largest population of impacted Salvadorans with 19,000 losing their TPS designation, followed by Dallas with approximately 10,000.

These individuals are not strangers. They are our family, friends, coworkers and fellow congregants who have lived here, on average, for 20 years. They have established deep roots in this country and their communities. Taking this status away destroys their worlds and stifles their children's future. It harms their communities in this country, while also amplifying economic and political instability in El Salvador.

Rather than taking away their temporary legal status, these Salvadorans should be granted permanent legal status. This act would formally recognize their deep roots in this nation, but it would also begin to redress for the havoc created by decades of U.S. policy in El Salvador.



San Salvador, along with the rest of El Salvador, is bracing for the return of as many as 200,000 Salvadorans who have been living in the United States.

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issues in San Antonio and addressing inequality in education, a lack of livable wages, the lack of health/mental health care, and the lack of truly affordable housing (not \$1000 for a 500 sqft studio).

This complex if moved forward, will block the view of this 100 plus year old gem. This gesture reaches back to the mandated segregation of this side of town robbing residents of an iconic symbol they take pride in and worked

hard to save in order to connect the Eastside to the heart of the City. We need to demand to HDRC, housing development, and City Council that San Antonio acknowledge our his-

tory, and recognize our historic buildings/views as treasures. They should demand the same standards in new development.

We want new development but we expect that it be thoughtful, respectful, and beautiful in design. If this development moves forward, this precious view will no longer be enjoyed by everyone in the city, but rather become another historical commodity that 25 residents will pay the premium for from their upscale apartment window.



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Photo: Kristel A. Orta-Puente

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