

Esperanza Breaks Ground on Museo del Westside!



Jubilation at the groundbreaking is expressed by Esperanza's Director, Graciela I. Sánchez and her 94 year old father, Enrique Sánchez who lives blocks away and has been active in planning the Museo along with Isabel, his recently deceased wife.

On Tuesday, March 29, 2022 the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center hosted a groundbreaking ceremony and press conference for the Museo del Westside, a new community participatory museum located at the corner of S. Colorado and Guadalupe Streets that will focus on the history and culture of the historic Westside. The former Ruben's Ice House will be rehabilitated to provide a home for the Museo that already houses an online archival exhibit, *Women & Activism in the Westside* (<https://www.museodelwestside.org/women-activism>), of 30 notable mujeres from the Westside in the fields of cultural arts, politics and community organizing. Construction is slated to be completed by May 2023 and will include a 600-square-foot addition made of compressed earth block at the rear similar to the MujerArtes studio completed



Project architect, Dwayne Bohuslav, who began the restoration process of Ruben's with Esperanza 12 years ago noted that "...each of these buildings was a miracle... and conjoined are a necklace of milagros."



Artist, David Gonzáles, formerly with the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, part of the museo's advisory committee, is donating his record collection of West Side artists.



District 5 Councilwoman Terry Castillo told the crowd: "Mexican-American history is San Antonio History and it is U.S. history. So it's about time that we have a space honoring the historic Westside of San Antonio."

in 2017 at the *Rinconcito de Esperanza* 816 S. Colorado. The groundbreaking included an Indigenous blessing led by Luissana Santibañez of the Kalpulli Ayolopaktzin group, speeches by officials and Buena gente who've been part of the process of imagining the Museo and the singing of legendary vocalist Blanca Rosa, 88 one of the surviving Tesoros del Westside accompanied by Henry Gomez and the Mariachi Esperanza. A few pictorial highlights follow:

Graciela Sanchez, Esperanza's executive director, addressed a crowd of about 100 saying, "It's obvious that people want and need this *museo*, and love and respect the history and the culture and the tradition of the West Side,"

Terry Castillo, District 5 Councilwoman stated "Mexican-American history, West Side history, is San Antonio history, and it is U.S. history... So it's about time that we have a space honoring the historic West Side..."

The Museo's offerings will be driven by contributions from community members, whether oral histories or

artifacts. Artist, David Gonzales, formerly with the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center and on the museo's advisory committee, is donating his record collection of West Side artists.

Project architect, Dwayne Bohuslav, who began the restoration process of Ruben's with Esperanza's vision 12 years ago noted that "...each of these buildings was a miracle... and that there could be a way of thinking about them being conjoined into a kind of necklace of *milagros*."

*Patty Radle, former District 5 councilwoman who provided initial funds that made possible the purchase of Ruben's Ice House praised the Esperanza community for its 15-year commitment to realizing the museum vision acknowledging that "amid subsequent Westside property sales, there are a lot of people who aren't necessarily committed to what this community is about."

Antonia Castañeda, former associate professor of history at St. Mary's University and Museo advisory board noted: "It is important to know not only that we have these spaces, but what these spaces cost—and not in monetary terms, but in terms of struggle, in terms of politics, in terms of blood, sweat and tears..."



The wooden half of Ruben's Ice House, originally a home, dates back to the 1930s. In the 1950s, it became M & E Grocery Store run by Manuel and Elida Reyes. Ten years later it became an ice house where families would gather for burgers, puffy tacos and beer sold from a window on the side of the building. Ruben's closed in 1987.