

# Best Community Project

## The Promesa Building



COURTESY OF LOPEZ SALAS ARCHITECTS

BY HALEY MATHIS

**P**romesa in Spanish means "promise." And so the Avenida Guadalupe Association chose the name for its new commercial/retail space being built at 1314 Guadalupe St.

The Promesa Building is creating many opportunities in the local community. And J. Oscar Ramirez, president/CEO of the nonprofit wanted the new space to reflect that.

"The most important part of the project was its purpose. This building was conceived as a vehicle to serve this community," says Robert A. Lopez, president & CEO of Lopez Salas Architects Inc. "We knew from the start that all major decisions would be filtered through the principle of 'How will this better serve our community?' Oscar never let us forget that, and the project is better for it."

Located across the street from the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, the Promesa is an office building designed for small businesses and local startups to lease space at an affordable rate, leading to more commerce and job creation in the neighborhood.

"We are hoping it will bring jobs to the neighborhood. In the whole project we hope to create a minimum of 43 jobs, and new services through the businesses we are able to recruit to the area," Ramirez says.

The planning, fundraising, and construction process took more than five years of hard work. During that time passion for the project never waned.

"With a lot of buildings, you build them, people go in them, and it's just another

structure. But this building had so much passion about what it stood for, in that it's for the near West Side community. Oscar had been working on putting this project together for many years, so his excitement was catching for us. Everybody involved just fell in love with the project," says Mike Kaiman, vice president and general manager of Turner Construction Co.

The construction of the building also created opportunity in the local construction community. An average of 60 percent of every dollar spent on contractors and subcontractors went to a local, small, women, and minority business enterprise (SWMBE).

"In today's market the typical project averages about 30 percent to 35 percent of every dollar to SWMBEs, so 60 percent is just remarkable," says Kaiman. "One extremely large component on this project was making sure that this project was being built by local small businesses that could feel that passion as well."

The construction also provided opportunities to local high school students. Students from Thomas Jefferson High School, an SAISD architecture magnet school, were invited by the project team to come to the job site during the building's construction, and learn from the project managers and architects.

"It's an amazing site to see these young sophomores, juniors and seniors in high school have this great interest in construction and architecture, and hopefully having them come out to the site impacted their lives," Kaiman says.

HALEY MATHIS is a San Antonio freelance writer.

**Owner:**

Avenida Guadalupe Association, San Antonio, TX

**Architect:**

Lopez Salas Architects, Inc., San Antonio, TX

**General Contractor:**

Turner Construction Co., San Antonio, TX

**Program Manager:**

Broaddus &amp; Associates, San Antonio, TX

**Main Engineer:**

TTG Goetting, San Antonio, TX

**Address of property/project:** 1314 Guadalupe Street, San Antonio, TX 78207 (Guadalupe and Brazos Street) • **Size:** 15,610 square-foot building on 0.543 acres • **Timeline of deal:** Property was managed by the Avenida Guadalupe Association under a long-term lease with the City of San Antonio; The Avenida approached the city in 2007 and asked it to consider selling the surplus property; Avenida and other potential buyers bid on the property; Avenida was the winning bidder; Final purchase was in September 2011; Construction on the site began on Nov. 1, 2012; shell and core is expected to be complete in August 2013. • **Financing:** A combination of a \$320,000 grant from the Office of Community Service under the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services; a \$1,750,000 grant from the Economic Development Agency under the U.S. Department of Commerce; a \$500,000 grant from the City of San Antonio, Community Development Block Grant program; \$300,000 from Avenida Guadalupe Association reserves; a \$960,000 loan from the Raza Development Fund. • **End-use of the property:** Commercial/retail space to provide new jobs and services in the community.

**Above:** Rendering of The Promesa Building depicts the busy community the owners hope to draw.

**Below:** Construction on The Promesa Building is being handled by Turner Construction Co.



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# On Culture, Climate Context and Craft

A description by Francisco Lopez of Lopez Salas Architects Inc.

The Promesa Building features architecture with local flavor. It responds to the owner's vision of honoring culture. On its own, the building stands prominently. And yet, it manages to nestle adjacent to Heroes Plaza, a pocket park featuring local performances and gathering. Lopez Salas Architects (LSA) is mindful that a building's essence is infused by its community; it speaks of tradition, heritage, progress and — ultimately — a sense of place.

Sustainable buildings are not a trend at LSA. Rather, we offer a holistic approach to architecture responding to real-site conditions. The floor plan is organized to provide a natural flow of circulation to all office areas. An oval-shaped atrium opens the building to the natural light. A central staircase connects both floors and draws visitors toward a colorful elevator tower. Lease areas are designed to accommodate single or multi-tenant spaces. Glazing is specified as 1" insulated glass for optimum performance and protection of heat gain. Tree shading and low-E glazing support south and west facing walls. An Energy Star white thermoplastic polyolefins (TPO) roof, with supportive insulation values, combat solar heat gain from above. The landscape design incorporates existing trees and adds new trees to provide shade.

The Promesa Building has been crafted by a team of passionate individuals and embraces the story of the near West Side. In the future, the east and west walls will feature an art screen at the exterior stairways. The north facade's most prominent feature is a glass, steel and aluminum two-story atrium flanked by character plaster frames.

Inspired by a luminaria, this central feature emanates the inner light through the Heroes Plaza and on to the community. We like to think of The Promesa Building as the new beacon of San Antonio's near West Side.



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Upper Left: San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro (second from right) tours The Promesa.

Left: Members from the design, construction and ownership team of The Promesa.

Below: More than 60 percent of each dollar paid to contractors on the Promesa Building went to a Small, Woman, Minority Business Enterprise (SWMBE) designated firm.



COURTESY OF LOPEZ SALAS ARCHITECTS

Below: Signatures from the architectural firm team lend a personal touch. Right: Students from Thomas Jefferson High School, an SAISD architecture magnet school, were invited by the project team to come to the job site during the building's construction, and learn from the project managers and architects.



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