Best Community Project
The Promesa Building

BY HALEY MATHIS

Promesa 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 Sales 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 60 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, 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 Kalman, 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 SWMBE, so 60 percent is just remarkable," says Kalman. "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," Kalman says.

"We hope the Promesa Building depicts the busy community the owners hope to draw.

FINALLY Construction on The Promesa Building is being handled by Turner Construction Co.
On Culture, Climate Context and Craft
A description by Francisco Lopez of Lopez Salas Architects Inc.

The Promessa 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 sit well adjacent to Riverwalk Plaza, a pocket park featuring local performances and gatherings. 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 designed 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 1/4 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 polyolefin (TPO) roof, with reflective insulation values, combat solar heat gain from above. The landscape design incorporates existing trees and adds new trees to provide shade.

The Promessa 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 art screens at the exterior stairways. The north facade's most prominent feature is a glass, steel and aluminum two-story arched facade 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 Promessa Building as the new beacon of San Antonio's near West Side.

Left: San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro (second from right) tours The Promessa. Left: Members of the design, construction and ownership team of The Promessa. 

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