



Base Realignment and Closure

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Historic theater to gain new life under \$16.9 million BRAC renovation, expansion project

*(Source: U.S. Army
Corps of Engineers)*

After sitting vacant for more than two decades, one of the first dedicated movie theaters built by the U.S. Army in the United States is about to begin a journey back in time.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District, has awarded a \$16.9 million contract to Lampasas, Texas-based RKJ Construction, Inc. to renovate and build an addition to the 75-year-old main post theater.

The theater will become the new home of the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command's Army Entertainment Division, which is relocating to Fort Sam Houston from Fort Belvoir, Va. as part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure mandates.

This division stages a touring musical production called the U.S. Army Soldier Show, featuring active duty Soldiers selected by audition from throughout the Army.

The renovated 14,700- square-foot theater will serve as the rehearsal hall for the cast of the annual production, while an 18,000-square-foot addition will provide space for offices, recording studios, and equipment storage.

The project will alter the building's original movie theater configuration to accommodate theatrical productions, extending the existing stage and modifying the rear portion of the building to incorporate the 80-foot-tall rigging necessary to raise and lower stage sets.

Balcony seating will be removed to make room for lighting and sound equipment, reducing the theater's seating capacity from 1,100 to 800.

Many of the theater's architecturally distinctive elements will be retained as part of the renovation effort. Built in 1935, in a Spanish Colonial Revival style with white stucco exterior, arched entryways, and a bell tower the theater is reminiscent of Spanish missions.

It's historic appearance and character will remain intact through preservation of a number of features, including original light fixtures, wooden banisters, exterior lamp posts, the heavy wooden front doors, carved wooden ceiling beams, frescoes and wall murals, and the original ticket booth in front of the main entrance.

Plans also call for replica film posters to be mounted on the interior walls when the project concludes, expected to be fall 2011.

This contract is one of 26 expected to be awarded in fiscal year 2010 for BRAC and other military construction projects in San Antonio. The projected value of these contracts exceeds \$390 million.

During the past two fiscal years, contracts worth almost \$2 billion have been awarded through the San Antonio BRAC and military construction program.

The rapid pace of construction has put the San Antonio BRAC program on track to complete several projects in 2010.

By the end of the fiscal year in September, it is anticipated that more than 20 facilities will have been made ready to begin supporting military missions and personnel that are coming to San Antonio from other parts of the country.



Photos by L.A. Shively

The main post theater was built in 1935 in a Spanish Colonial Revival style with white stucco exterior, arched entryways, and a bell tower reminiscent of Spanish missions. The building's historic appearance and character will remain intact including the original ticket booth in front of the main entrance after renovation. The theatre's curtain (above) will open again, but live shows will grace the now-empty stage. The exterior and ornaments on the building's façade will retain their original character. A mural (left) of the theatre located inside the theatre stage left currently stands peeling and nearly obscured by time. An upstairs lobby (bottom) will again welcome guests after renovation.

