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PRESS RELEASE

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COUNCILMEMBER JOSE HUIZAR AND MAYOR VILLARAIGOSA PARTNER WITH AUTRY NATIONAL CENTER TO CREATE SOUTHWEST SOCIETY

*The new Society will raise funds and visibility for what is
the first museum in the City of Los Angeles*

LOS ANGELES, Calif. (September 27, 2007) — Councilmember José Huizar, District 14, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and John Gray, President of the Autry National Center, announced the formation of the Southwest Society. This new Blue Ribbon committee of local elected and community leaders will help raise funds to restore and revitalize the Southwest Museum and Casa de Adobe and ensure these historic treasures thrive as cultural and educational destinations for Angelinos and visitors alike.

The Autry National Center merged with the Southwest Museum in 2003 to save the building and the collection. The Autry—which has already invested \$6.5 million into the Southwest Museum—has committed to continue to rehabilitate the Southwest building; preserve the priceless collection; expand public uses of the Museum; store and display a portion of the Southwest collection onsite in Mt. Washington; increase educational, cultural and other programmatic activities at the Southwest Museum; and expand public understanding of the historic and contemporary lives of the Southwest.

“This astonishing Museum was the first in all of Los Angeles. Our mission today is to build on this history, and make the Southwest Museum and Casa de Adobe into living, thriving destinations. I am thrilled that today the community and civic leaders, policymakers, and the Autry are all united around this vision. We are rolling up our sleeves and all pitching in to make it a reality,” said Councilmember Huizar.

“Today we are making a commitment together - as a community - to restore this uniquely Los Angeles landmark to the place it deserves in our City landscape. When Charles Lummis founded the Southwest Museum 100 years ago, he envisioned a place for the community and curiosity to come together. It's now time we rekindle that vision,” said Mayor Villaraigosa.

"Councilmember Jose Huizar's leadership will long be remembered because of his work on behalf of the Southwest Museum and its community," said Council President Eric Garcetti. "And our heritage as a city will long be remembered because of his leadership."

"Our history, our culture and our traditions are among our greatest legacies," said Speaker Nuñez. "If we don't know our history, our struggles and our triumphs as a society, we miss out on learning valuable lessons and celebrating great accomplishments. I applaud the Southwest Society's efforts to preserve so many things that have helped defined us, and I look forward to the day when my children's children will be able to learn great lessons from the Southwest Museum."

"The Southwest Society will be an important partner as the Autry prepares the Arroyo campus for its next generation use as an arts, cultural and educational center," said John Gray. "We appreciate the tremendous support from Mayor Villaraigosa and Councilman Huizar. The Autry has already invested millions of dollars into the restoration and preservation efforts and we look forward to working with the Society to create a dynamic new cultural destination in Mt. Washington."

"The agreement brokered by Councilman Huizar provides assurances that two of our community's key institutions--the Southwest Museum and the Casa de Adobe- will be preserved, revitalized and maintained as vibrant cultural resources. It represents a major victory for Los Angeles' northeast neighborhoods" said Eliot Sekuler, Past Co-Chair of the Friends of the Southwest Museum Coalition and Vice President of the Arroyo Seco Neighborhood Council.

"The Southern California Indian Center is very appreciative of the work of the Autry National Center in conserving, preserving and protecting the vast collection of unique American Indian and colonial artifacts. It ensures that our heritage is preserved and respected," said Paula Starr, Executive Director, Southern California Indian Center.

The Southwest Museum, Los Angeles' oldest museum, holds one of the most important artifact, library and archive collections related to the American Indian. However, the priceless collection and landmark building have suffered substantial damage from environmental conditions, including heavy rains and earthquakes, deterioration caused by age, and the inadequate storage facilities at the Museum. The Casa de Adobe, a reproduction of an 1800s California ranch house built in 1918 using authentic adobe materials, has also been damaged by weather and age requiring substantial repairs.

Founding members of the Southwest Society include local elected officials, prominent members of the Los Angeles arts and cultural community, Native American leaders, and Mt. Washington civic leaders. All funds raised by the Society will be exclusively used to benefit the Southwest Museum, the Braun Library, and the Casa de Adobe.

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