

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, Austin’s rapid growth is resulting in the loss of important and irreplaceable historic assets across the city; and

WHEREAS, historic preservation offices in other cities facilitate effective planning efforts as well as evaluate and preserve each city’s historic assets; and

WHEREAS, robust integration of Austin’s Historic Preservation Office (HPO) activities, duties, and responsibilities into City planning efforts can only be done with adequate staffing and authority; and

WHEREAS, adopted City plans such as Imagine Austin, the Downtown Plan, and the Strategic Direction 2023 call for policies and programs that honor and promote the preservation of Austin’s historic, cultural, and ethnic heritage; and

WHEREAS, Council recently established the Historic Preservation Fund with revenue from the hotel occupancy tax to provide much-needed investment in heritage tourism and city-owned and private historic sites; and

WHEREAS, these opportunities will be fully realized only with adequate staffing; and

WHEREAS, in February 2017, the City Auditor reported several issues preventing the HPO and Historic Landmark Commission (HLC) from achieving

their mission to support the preservation of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods that reflect elements of Austin’s cultural, social, political, and architectural history; and

WHEREAS, this audit found that compared with peer cities, the HLC has the second highest caseload per meeting and the HPO has one of the lowest full-time employee staffing levels among similar programs; and

WHEREAS, the University of Texas at Austin Gentrification Study team reported to the City’s Anti-Displacement Task Force on January 5, 2018, that roughly 3,000 historic-age buildings have been demolished in the past five years, many in neighborhoods historically home to persons of color and in lower-income areas with high concentrations of rental properties; and

WHEREAS, the East Austin Historic Resources Survey that Council approved in December 2016 identifies a number of potential historic landmarks and historic districts with significant architectural and ethnic/cultural heritage; and

WHEREAS, due to a lack of resources within the HPO and in the community, the City has, to date, received no applications for potential landmark designations or historic districts in the survey area; and

WHEREAS, equitable treatment for the city’s historically disadvantaged communities requires an investment in public outreach, assistance, and historic preservation expertise; and

WHEREAS, on February 26, 2018, the HLC passed a resolution recommending the City Council evaluate the current fee structure for historic zoning and recommending additional funding and staffing in the FY 2019 budget to enable the HPO to identify historic properties, develop design standards, and work with communities to develop local historic districts; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council directs the City Manager to consider the following improvements and return to Council with an analysis on the benefits, feasibility, and annual cost of each by June 28, 2018:

1. Creating a separate Preservation Planning Division within the Planning and Zoning Department equal in standing to divisions such as Urban Design and Long-Range Planning to provide the preservation program with a stronger voice in carrying out preservation priorities and efforts and to better integrate its activities into the City's planning, equity, and economic development efforts.
2. Aligning the HPO staffing levels with peer cities along the following priority areas:

- a. Necessary Preservation Planning Division management, coordination, and supervision of all historic preservation activities and preservation staff;
 - b. Community assistance in developing local historic district applications, especially in areas experiencing significant loss of cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural assets;
 - c. Community education and outreach activities and development of community partnerships for preservation;
 - d. Strengthened review of demolition and certificate of appropriateness applications;
 - e. Strengthened inspection of construction projects subject to a certificate of appropriateness and investigation of violations of the historic preservation code requirements.
3. Revising outdated sections of the Land Development Code related to historic preservation activities to reflect best practices in the field, including the establishment of clearer language for designation criteria and additional qualification requirements for HLC membership in line with peer cities.
 4. Funding historic resource survey efforts citywide on an annual basis.
 5. Posting backup materials for commission and public review at least three business days prior to HLC meetings.

6. Streamlining commission meetings through identification of cases that may be administratively approved.
7. Permitting HPO staff to apply for and accept grants in any amount to carry out preservation programming.
8. Providing adequate support and training of HPO staff and HLC members by a city attorney with experience in preservation law or provide for outside expert counsel on an as-needed basis.
9. Reviewing the current historic zoning fee structure to identify opportunities for equity and affordability.

ADOPTED: _____, 2018

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk