



FY2019 BUDGET RESOLUTION RECOMMENDATION

Historic Landmark Commission Recommendation **20200224-6.A**

NOTE: Cost estimates are being collected for recommended items. Staff anticipates posting a revised recommendation with additional information prior to the Historic Landmark Commission meeting on 2/24/2020.

WHEREAS the City of Austin Historic Landmark Commission was established in 1974 to promote historic preservation activities in Austin and advise the Austin City Council on matters related to historic preservation; and

WHEREAS the purpose of the Historic Landmark Commission is to prepare and periodically revise an inventory of the structures and areas that may be eligible for designation as historic landmarks, most recently completed in 1984; prepare, review, and propose amendments to a citywide Historic Preservation Plan, last adopted in 1981; and review requests to establish or remove a historic designation and make recommendations on the requests to the Land Use Commission; and

WHEREAS the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan outlines historic preservation policies for the City of Austin to preserve and interpret historic resources in Austin for residents and visitors, with goals including 1) the inventory and protection of historic buildings, structures, sites, places, and districts in neighborhoods throughout the city; and 2) the retention of the character of National Register and local historic districts by ensuring development is compatible with the historic character of the districts; and

WHEREAS the Strategic Direction 2023 includes the honoring and preservation of historical and ethnic heritage as an indicator category, with strategies that include protecting places that reflect Austin's diverse history and broadening support for and participation in preserving underrepresented histories and resources; and

WHEREAS much has changed since Austin's current citywide Historic Preservation Plan was adopted in 1981, historic preservation protects places with cultural and historical significance, and can help meet other community goals such as equity, affordability, density, health, and sustainability;

WHEREAS a booming real estate market is driving extensive demolition and new development in areas with longtime human habitation, including potential archaeological resources, and Historic Preservation Office staff do not possess expertise in archaeology;

WHEREAS technical support, monitoring, and regulation of historic rehabilitation projects is essential for effective enforcement of the Historic Landmark Commission's duties, as proscribed by Code;

WHEREAS the Commission finds the current application process for designation of historic landmarks and historic districts, and the historic review process for substantial projects, require an investment of time and funds by homeowners and neighborhoods, including fees that may be cost-prohibitive;

WHEREAS historic preservation principles and regulations prioritize the retention of historic character, including building materials, and cost comparisons of retention versus replacement would support historic preservation efforts;

WHEREAS owners of low- and mid-rise historic landmarks and contributing properties in historic districts do not currently possess tools to leverage their potential development rights (“air rights”);

WHEREAS the Commission finds that the identification and evaluation of all properties within the city of Austin is a necessary step in developing a process to preserve historic properties that convey the significance of all areas of the city; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Landmark Commission recommends that the Council allocate funds to the Historic Preservation Office in the amount of \$_____ for FY2021 to implement the historic preservation responsibilities and priorities as outlined by the Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Land Development Code, Imagine Austin, and Strategic Direction 2023; and allocate an additional \$177,000 annually to the Historic Preservation Office to fund additional permanent staff positions. To meet the City of Austin’s historic preservation responsibilities and priorities, the Historic Landmark Commission recommends the following steps:

1. Fund a new Preservation Plan for Austin with equity as an essential lens and extensive community engagement.
2. Create the position of City Archaeologist to manage and coordinate federal, state, and local cultural resource laws, rules, and regulations; help document and preserve archaeological resources; and educate the public about local archaeology. (Approx. \$100,000 annually)
3. Allocate substantial staff time to provide technical advice to property owners and inspect construction projects after the Certificate of Appropriateness has been issued. Failure to meet the requirements of approved Certificates of Appropriateness, as determined by this construction inspection, results in fines and/or other penalties per Code. (Approx. \$77,000 annually)
4. Initiate a study to evaluate the current fee structure for landmark and local historic district zoning applications and assess options for increasing equity through reduced fees or other mechanisms.
5. Fund a cost comparison tool for rehabilitation projects. (Approx. \$5,800 in FY21)
6. Fund a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Market Analysis to assess the feasibility of this important tool in protecting historic landmarks and historic districts while allowing increased height and density in other priority areas.
7. Fund ongoing and future historic resource surveys using Hotel Occupancy Tax funds and other resources as necessary, based on the priority areas identified as part of the Citywide Historic Building Scan and with attention to equity and development pressures.