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February 24, 2020

Emily Reed, Chair
City of Austin
Historic Landmark Commission

Re: FY2021 Budget Resolution Recommendation

Dear Ms. Reed,

Preservation Austin respectfully supports the Historic Landmark Commission's proposed FY2021 Budget Resolution Recommendation and our colleagues' priorities for the Historic Preservation Office in the coming year.

Proposed funding for a 21st century Preservation Plan for Austin stands out in particular. As noted in the recommendation, our city's current Preservation Plan dates to 1981. At that time Austin's population was approaching 350,000; its preservation program, established in 1974, was just getting on its feet; and mid-century buildings and neighborhoods were decades from reaching the 50-year threshold for historic zoning. Its priorities reflect those of a small city making its first foray into preservation activities.

But Austin, and the preservation movement as a whole, looks far different today than it did forty years ago. We now live in one of the nation's fastest-growing cities with a population nearing the one-million mark. The opportunities and challenges presented by our rapidly-changing urban landscape demand a new approach to preservation, one that reflects 21st century values while honoring diverse histories of our past, that encourages investment in historic resources both for their inherent value and because doing so aligns with broader goals of building a more affordable, equitable, and sustainable city.

A new Preservation Plan, developed with extensive public engagement and in tandem with passage of the new land development code, gives Austin the opportunity to incorporate meaningful preservation goals into future planning efforts citywide. We are excited by the recommendation for an equity lens to address longstanding imbalances in preservation priorities, making our city a leader in such efforts nationwide. A revised preservation ordinance that reflects national best practices should be an outcome of the plan as well.

Our nonprofit is committed to supporting this effort. We thank the Preservation Plan Committee for its vision and the Historic Landmark Commission for its dedication.

Sincerely,

Lori Martin
President