



UPDATE: EQUITY-BASED HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN
Historic Landmark Commission – September 27, 2021

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Equity-Based Historic Preservation Plan



La versión en español sigue a continuación.

Background

The equity-based historic preservation plan (phase 1, 2021–22) will replace Austin's 1981 preservation plan with an inclusive, equity-focused, and community-oriented process and outcome. A working group composed of historic preservation professionals, stakeholders from allied fields, and community representatives is tackling pressing questions: Whose heritage is represented in designated historic properties, and what stories are missing? Who benefits from preservation policies, programs, and incentives? How can historic preservation tools be expanded to address essential issues such as sustainability, affordability, and displacement?

Phase 1 will result in a draft historic preservation plan, including recommendations [Continue reading](#)

Provide input/Provea sus comentarios

News feed

Background/Antecedentes

Community Survey

Your input will help create the vision for Austin's new equity-based historic preservation plan! The preservation plan will recommend policies, programs, and tools to celebrate and preserve buildings, neighborhoods, and stories that reflect Austin's rich and complex heritage. Add your voice!

[Encuesta a la comunidad](#)

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Documents/Documentos

Meeting 1- July 29, 2021

Meeting 2 - August 30, 2021

- Agenda (187 KB) (pdf)
- Brief (1.55 MB) (pdf)
- Presentation (1.58 MB) (pdf)
- Meeting Summary (140 KB) (pdf)

Meeting 3 - September 23, 2021

Working Group Members (133 KB) (pdf)

Project Timeline/Calendario del Proyecto



Working group appointment

The Historic Landmark Commission appointed the Preservation Plan Working Group in June 2021 to draft the new plan. Working group members are racially, ethnically, and geographically diverse, with strong community ties.

Nombramiento del grupo de trabajo

La Comisión de Monumentos Históricas nombró al Grupo de Trabajo del Plan de Preservación en junio de 2021 para redactar el nuevo plan. El grupo incluye miembros con diversidad racial, étnica y geográfica.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Essential Background and Process

July 29	Introduction and goals
Aug. 30	Equity workshop
Sept. 23	Decision-making

Topics

Oct. 14	Vision for the plan / Heritage in Austin (part 1)
Nov. 18	Heritage in Austin (part 2)
Dec. 9	Preservation tools
Jan. 13	Processes and fees
Feb. 10	Community preservation

MEETING SCHEDULE

Topics (con't)

March 10	Preservation and... Economic development, property rights
April 14	Outreach, education, and engagement
May 12	Topic TBD

Review draft plan

June 9	Review compiled recommendations / Discuss next steps
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MEETING 1: INTRODUCTION + GOALS

What does preservation do?

BRIEF #1 FOR PRESERVATION PLAN WORKING GROUP | JULY 2021

Identify historic resources

Important historic properties are identified proactively through surveys or citizen curiosity...



...Or reactively through a demolition application, where staff uncover important information about the resource during routine permit review.



Preserve historic resources

Preservation of important resources happens through historic designation. Historic designation at the local level can be initiated by the property owner, community members (for historic districts), or the Historic Landmark Commission. Historic resources can also be designated at the state and federal levels, with different levels of protection.

Visit the [Historic Property Viewer](#) to see historic landmarks, historic districts, and National Register districts.



Local
644 historic landmarks
8 historic districts



State
201 resources



National Register
173 individual
18 districts



Binding City review

Advisory City review of major projects

Historic preservation recognizes and safeguards significant places—and can play an important role in shaping the future. Preservation in Austin includes many activities; this overview focuses on the City's Historic Preservation Office and Historic Landmark Commission.

Steward historic resources

City staff work with property owners to ensure that changes to historic resources meet occupant needs while retaining the property's important historic features. Read the [Historic Design Standards](#) used to evaluate most projects.

Small changes can be approved administratively by staff. The Historic Landmark Commission reviews larger and/or more visible changes. Repair, maintenance, and interior changes do not require historic review.



Local Property tax incentives
State and National Register
Historic tax credits



Local Code citations, legal action (exceedingly rare)
State and National Register
legal action (for State resources, exceedingly rare)

Outreach and engagement

Most community members find out about nearby historic projects and potential historic resources via mailed notifications of Historic Landmark Commission hearings. These mailings are required by City Code.

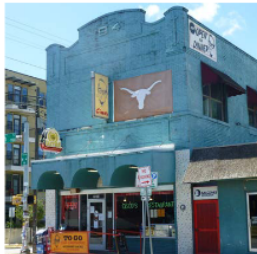
[Historic resource surveys](#) are a way to learn more about the history of certain areas. Typically conducted by consultants, the survey process includes large public meetings and other opportunities for input.

Historic district applications require extensive outreach and engagement by community applicant teams. City staff supports these efforts.

Other recent engagement

- [Translating Community History project](#)
- [Imagine Austin speaker event](#)
- Hands-on wood window repair workshop
- Citizen working groups for the Heritage Grant and the Historic Design Standards

Icons from the Noun Project: Person with tablet by Irene Hoffman, buildings by Laurent Genereux, wrecking ball by Pham Duy Phuong Hung, armadillo by Amanda Sebastiani, Texas by Alexander Skowalsky, United States by Ted Grajeda, hammer by David Khai, carrot by CHARIE Tristan, lightsaber by Vectors Market



MEETING 2: EQUITY WORKSHOP

Root causes and current-day inequities

THE 1928 CITY PLAN FOR AUSTIN AND CREATION OF A SEGREGATED "NEGRO DISTRICT"

Through early 20th century zoning and planning policy, the City established a "Negro District" designed to keep Black people separated from whites. City Planners were aware of the fact that they could not legally zone neighborhoods across racial lines, but they recommended the creation of a "Negro District" because the largest Black population was already located in East Austin. This district was the only part of the city where Black people could access schools, public utilities, and other public services. However, the City underfunded public services in the district, and private developers refused to provide utilities as an alternative option for residents, as was common in white neighborhoods. Streets in some parts of the district were not paved until the 1960s and 1970s. The district was also the area with the fewest zoning restrictions.

1928

"There has been considerable talk in Austin, as well as other cities, in regard to the race segregation problem. This problem cannot be solved legally under any zoning law known to us at present. In our studies in Austin, we have found that the negroes are present in small numbers, in practically all sections of the city, excepting the area just east of East Avenue and south of the City Cemetery. This area seems to be all negro population. It is our recommendation that the nearest approach to the solution of the race segregation problem will be the recommendation of this district as a negro district..."

— 1928 City Plan

REMOVAL OF MEXICAN AMERICANS

Parts of Austin's old First Ward and settlements along Shoal Creek were predominantly Mexican and Mexican American. The increased land value resulting from stabilization of the Colorado River and the rise of "downtown" Austin's business district pushed out Mexican American residents, businesses, and churches.



1930s

Beginning with the 1928 City Plan, the advent of formal planning injected deep-rooted racism into municipal documents. As Austin grew, these plans ensured that white property owners profited and communities of color continued to struggle to meet basic needs.



RACIALLY RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS AND SEGREGATED PUBLIC HOUSING

A form of tri-racial segregation that used "caucasian only" or "white only" in private deeds and covenants emerged. This marked a shift from the previously used language of "no people of African descent" and was a direct response to the increased numbers of people from Mexico or of "Mexican descent." This tri-racial system prohibited both Black and Latinx people from buying or renting homes in many neighborhoods outside of East Austin. These deed restrictions were often required by the Federal Housing Administration to even secure financing for the construction of housing.

In the late 1930s, the City Council voted to build racially segregated public housing. Santa Rita Courts (for Mexican Americans), Rosewood Courts (for African Americans) and Chalmers Courts (for whites), the first federal public housing projects in the nation, all located in East Austin.

1935-->

1930s

REDLINING

The segregation and concentration of people and industrial uses in Austin was further perpetuated by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), established in 1933 by Congress to refinance mortgages in default and prevent foreclosures. In 1935 the corporation created residential security maps for 239 cities to guide government-backed mortgages and other loans. The maps graded areas considered "Best" for lending as Type A. These areas were primarily wealthy suburbs on the outskirts of town. "Still Desirable" neighborhoods were given a Type B grade, and older neighborhoods were given a Type C grade and considered "Declining." Type D neighborhoods were labeled "Hazardous" and regarded as most risky for loans. Austin's Type D areas closely followed the boundaries of the "Negro District." It meant that families seeking to purchase property in the area—most often Black families—could not access loans with favorable terms. Families that did purchase property had to go through white intermediary buyers or purchase small houses and add on later as they saved more money. Redlining also limited Black property owners in maintaining, repairing, and adding to their buildings; as only personal funds were available; and contributed to the later perception of these neighborhoods as "slums." The map also called out a "Mexican District."



Timeline text from the *Nothing About Us Without Us: Racial Equity Anti-Displacement Tool* report

Image credits: Diez y Seis parade float, ca. 1920s (PICA 36924, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library); Rosewood Courts, 1954 (ASPL_DM-54-C18907, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library); HOLC map, 1935

MEETING 3: DECISION-MAKING



1. **Vision:** Does the plan offer a clear vision for historic preservation that can be used by stakeholders to communicate and collaborate? Do all recommendations support that vision?
2. **Process:** Has the process of developing the preservation plan been welcoming and accessible to community members with a range of viewpoints, regardless of previous preservation experience?
3. **Education:** Does the plan educate readers about the benefits of historic preservation and how preservation relates to key topics such as property rights, displacement, and affordability?
4. **Expansion:** Does the plan recognize historically underrepresented people, places, and stories? Does it expand what is considered "historic"?
5. **Effectiveness:** Are the plan's recommendations for policies, programs, and incentives grounded in good practices from around the U.S. and the world?
6. **Practicality:** Does the plan balance big-picture thinking with specific, actionable, measurable recommendations that recognize legal constraints? Does the plan include a realistic strategy for regular updates?
7. **Accessibility:** Does the plan recommend ways to make historic preservation processes more accessible to community members, especially those who aren't familiar with the processes? Is the plan itself easy to understand?
8. **Equity:** Are the expected benefits of the plan's recommendations equitably distributed? Are negative impacts minimized, particularly for communities that have historically been disadvantaged by public policies?
9. **Connection:** Does the plan advance livability, affordability, and other community values, particularly for historically underrepresented communities?
10. **Support:** Is the plan supported by working group members, policymakers, City departments, allied organizations, and community members?

MEETING 3: DECISION-MAKING

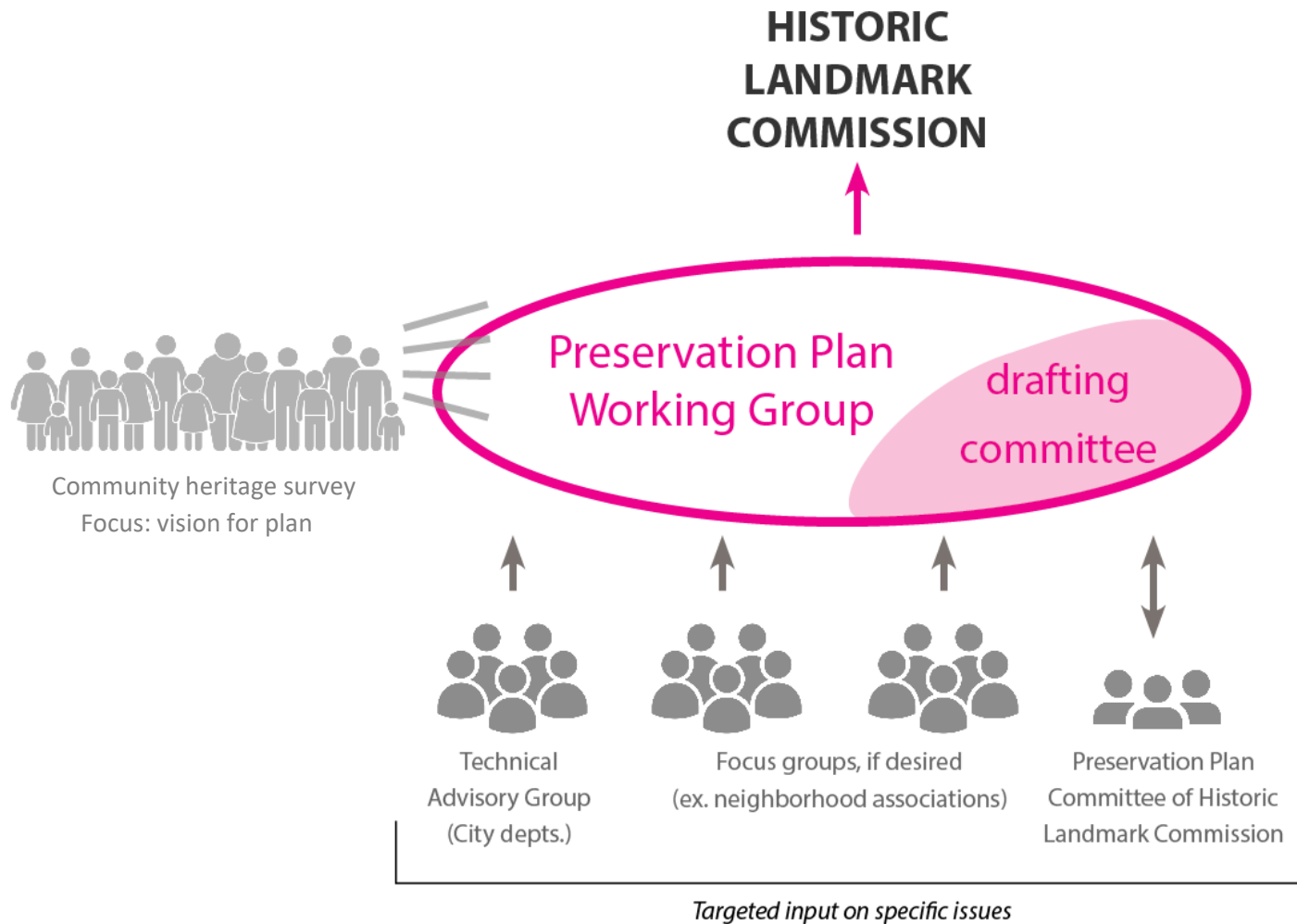
Equity evaluation framework

Goal: Ensure that the plan's recommendations benefit—or at least do not harm—communities of color who have been historically underrepresented in preservation efforts and harmed by previous public policies.

DRAFT EQUITY EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Does the proposed recommendation...	-1 No / harms	0 Neutral	+1 Yes / benefits
1. Reinforce the plan's vision?			
2. Respect community-based knowledge, and is it based on community-identified needs and input?			
3. Increase equitable access to information about historic preservation? Is it clear to people without previous preservation experience?			
4. Recognize and honor the cultures, historic assets, and traditions of historically underrepresented communities in meaningful ways?			
5. Ground its reasoning and expected outcomes in good practices around equity, including racially disaggregated data?			
6. Balance big-picture thinking with specific, actionable, measurable items that recognize and redress historical disparities?			
7. Improve access to preservation policies, programs, tools, and incentives for BIPOC and low-income communities?			
8. Avoid creating financial or other burdens for BIPOC communities and low-income people? If yes, are there opportunities to mitigate these impacts? Does it place responsibility on institutions to address historical disparities in historic preservation policies, programs, and tools?			
9. Advance affordability, economic opportunities, and sustainability for everyone, and especially for BIPOC communities? If not, are there opportunities to do so?			
10. Engage and empower BIPOC communities to actively participate in implementation?			

ENGAGEMENT



COMMUNITY HERITAGE SURVEY

bit.ly/ATXpres

Please:

Take the survey by Sunday, October 3

Spread the word

Share with your appointing CM